A Little Maid of MONMOUTH

ALICE TURNER CURTIS

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Curtis, A.T.
Little maid of Monmouth

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A Little Maid of
MONMOUTH

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ALICE TURNER CURTIS

Illustrated by Sandra James

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FIRST BORZOI EDITION

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A Little Maid of

MONMOUTH

CHAPTER I

BEE

Bee Marsh climbed to the top of the solid stone wall that bordered the road leading to Monmouth Court-House, and swiftly made her way to where a wide branch of a big oak tree hung well over the wall. With a quick glance down the lane she seated herself in the pleasant shade to wait for the sound of wagon-wheels and the clump, clump, of a horse's feet to tell her that Chubby, the fat brown horse, drawing the wagon with Mother on the high seat, would appear around the bend of the road.

It was a warm morning in early May and the little girl was content to rest after her scamper down the long lane that led from her home to the highway. She had so many pleasant things to think of that she did not notice the chittering, scolding squirrels running briskly along the wall as if to warn her that she was trespassing on their special domain, nor the fat red-breasted

robin that balanced on an upper branch of the oak tree and called that this tree was his own property, and small girls in pink gingham dresses must act accordingly and not scramble about under its branches.

Bee wondered happily if Mother might not get news of Father, perhaps even a letter from him saying that very soon he would be coming home from Valley Forge. For Bee's father was a soldier in the American Army, commanded by General George Washington, that in May, 1778, was preparing to follow the British forces under General Clinton across New Jersey. Or there might be a letter from Nancy telling about the good times she was having in Princeton with her cousin. Nancy was Bee's elder sister. She was fifteen, four years older than Bee, and she was to spend the summer with their Aunt Amy who had three girls and two boys of her own. Bee thought it must be a wonderful thing to live in a house with other girls and boys, especially in a fine town like Princeton. She was eager for letters from Nancy that would tell her all about these cousins that Bee had never seen, and about all that Nancy was doing.

Bee's blue eyes brightened as she heard the

rattle of wheels. She scrambled from the wall and ran down the road, her brown hair dancing about her shoulders and her white sunbonnet swinging from her arm. As Chubby made the turn in the road Mrs. Marsh quickly drew rein and in a moment Bee was on the high seat beside her mother; and, although there was neither news of Father nor a letter from Nancy, Mother began to tell a lot of interesting things that made Bee feel much older than eleven. Beside that there was sure to be the "gooseberry game."

The gooseberry game generally began when Chubby turned into the lane. Mrs. Marsh would reach down into the deep pocket of her gingham dress and draw out a small round package wrapped in a yellow paper and tied with green string. She would look at it and then at Bee as if she were very much surprised, which always made Bee chuckle with amusement. Then Mrs. Marsh would say:

"Why, of all things! Where do you suppose this came from?"

Bee would draw her shoulders forward, clasp her hands tightly together and laugh gleefully as her mother called out, "Whoa, Chubby!" Then she would untie the package and discover that it

contained, as it always did, six big round candy gooseberries. These gooseberries were of a pale green with narrow red lines and they were delightfully flavored with clove or wintergreen or peppermint.

Then with another exclamation of surprise Mrs. Marsh would hand the package to Bee; they would smile at each other and help themselves to a candy gooseberry. Then Mrs. Marsh would start the fat horse up the lane and after that, as the gooseberries were rather mouth-filling, there was no further conversation until they reached the house where Ring, the negro man who had always lived on the Marsh place and whose wife, Dilly, did the household work, came to help them down from the wagon-seat, carry the packages Mrs. Marsh had brought from the village into the house, and lead Chubby off to the stable.

But on this May day in 1778 Mrs. Marsh did not even draw rein as they turned into the lane. Bee looked at her expectantly but no package appeared. The little girl's face grew sober and her smile disappeared as they drove into the yard and Ring came limping forward. For the first time, Bee's mother had forgotten the candy gooseberries.

"No news from your master, Ring," Mrs. Marsh said in response to Ring's questioning look, "and all sorts of rumors at Monmouth Court-House. 'Tis said the English mean to leave Philadelphia and march across New Jersey to New York. If that is true it may well be that all we have will be taken from us and our home destroyed."

Ring shook his woolly head despondently and led Chubby toward the stable. The old colored man knew that his mistress was right, for the English troops, crossing from Staten Island, had made many raids upon New Jersey farms, stealing cattle and crops and burning houses. If General Clinton and his army were to march through Monmouth County it would surely mean danger to every home. Bee understood this as well as did Ring, and she now told herself that she knew why her mother had forgotten the gooseberries. But as Mrs. Marsh turned toward the house the little girl called after her: "Mother! Mother! I don't believe General Washington will let the English army march through New Jersey!"

Mrs. Marsh turned and looked at Bee as if she were not sure that it was Bee who had spoken.

Then, with a little smile, she reached down into the deep pocket and drew out a package wrapped in pale yellow paper and tied with a green string and handed it to Bee saying, " My dear, I nearly forgot our candy gooseberries! I won't take one. You can do what you please with them," and before Bee could even say, " Thank you," Mrs. Marsh had entered the house.

Bee sat down on the wide stone doorstep and slowly untied the package. Six big round candy balls with red stripes lay temptingly before her and as she put one in her mouth, realizing that it was her favorite clove flavor, she forgot about armies, about her disappointment in not hearing from her father or from Nancy and looked down admiringly at the remaining five gooseberries, resolving to eat only one a day.

But Bee's enjoyment was brief, for the gooseberry in her mouth had hardly begun to yield its delicious sweetness when Dilly appeared from the kitchen, fixed her disapproving eyes upon the little girl, exclaiming, " My lan'! " and lifted her hands above her head as if too shocked and surprised to say more.

It was a difficult moment for Bee. The gooseberry ball made it impossible for her to question

Dilly; to take the ball from her mouth would mean not only sticky fingers but a woeful waste of sweetness; so Bee waited, sure that Dilly would quickly explain her troubles, and in a moment Dilly was talking so rapidly that a stranger could not have understood her.

" Yo' ma didn' fergit yo' candy. No'm, Miss Melissa! She didn'! Dar yo' sits a-eatin' ob it. But what yo' ma did fergit was ebery las' t'ing she wen' ter de village ter fetch home. She ferget 'lasses, an' she ferget spice, an' she ferget ter fetch me de new han'chef fer me head, an' ——" But Bee could no longer keep silent; carefully she removed the candy ball from her mouth, wrapped it in a bit of the yellow paper and put it with the remaining perfect five. Then she jumped up from the step and said:

" Dilly, I don't want you to call me Melissa! You know I don't, but you keep right on."

" Yas'm, I does. Dat be yo' name, an' yo' runnin' 'roun' widout rememberin' of it," Dilly responded firmly, and with a solemn shake of her head the stout negress turned back to the kitchen, leaving Bee wondering what had made her mother forget the errands that had taken her to Monmouth Court-House. Could it be that there

was bad news from Father? Or from Nancy? News that her mother did not want Bee to know? And at this thought she turned and hurried into the house, quite forgetting that her name really was Melissa, and that, as Nancy often reminded her, when she grew up she would have to be called by it.

"What's the matter, Bee?" exclaimed Mrs. Marsh, as the little girl ran into the pleasant sitting-room, where her mother was standing near an open window that looked toward the distant Delaware.

Bee drew a quick breath. "Mother, what made you forget your errands to-day? And—and—everything?" she asked fearfully. "Was it—was it ——" But the little girl could not go on, could not ask if her soldier father had perhaps been taken prisoner by the English or Nancy thrown from the back of the saddle horse that the Princeton cousins had promised she should ride.

Mrs. Marsh shook her head smilingly. "No, Bee. No news at all of Father or Nancy. I forgot my errands because I was thinking about you; about finding some way to send you safely to your Aunt Amy in Princeton until all these dangers of advancing troops have passed."

"Will Dilly and Ring stay here?" questioned Bee, confident that her mother meant to go with her to Princeton.

"Yes, indeed. They will not desert me, and possibly we may all be safe here, but ——"

"Mother! Do you mean you want me to leave you here alone? Well, I guess my father wouldn't like that. I don't want to go anywhere! I'm going to stay here! If British soldiers do come we need not be afraid, need we, Mother?" Bee valiantly announced, for although Monmouth men had been in the American army since the beginning of the Revolution against England's unfair demands, Bee had but the slightest knowledge of its perils. Neither Mrs. Marsh nor her little daughter could know that in another month one of the important battles of the war was to be fought on the pleasant fields near Monmouth Court-House.

CHAPTER II

MELISSA

"Miss Me-liss-a! Miss Me-liss-aa!"

Dilly stood in the kitchen door and called loudly but there was no answer.

"Dat chile can't be fur off," muttered Dilly, and called again and again, until at last convinced that Bee must be out of hearing, she turned, scolding and muttering to her work.

Bee, crouching behind the blossoming lilacs in the far corner of the yard, a corner that was the little girl's special property, with a low wooden bench where her dolls could sit comfortably because it had a back, with a fine cupboard made of a wooden box on whose shelves were treasures of broken china, had heard Dilly's calls and whispered to Emmeline Adelaide, her most treasured doll: "I sha'n't stir a step when Dilly calls 'Melissa,' and she knows I won't." But when a few minutes later Bee heard the sound of Ring harnessing Chubby into the wagon she began to wonder if it would not have been wiser to have answered Dilly. It might well be, the little girl

decided, that Ring was off for Monmouth Court-House, as the little village three miles from Bee's home, at the intersection of three roads, was called.

" I do believe that's it, and that Dilly was calling to say I could go with him," thought Bee, and instantly she was off down the lane after the retreating wagon. " I'll catch up when Chubby slows down at the turn," thought Bee hopefully.

And at the turn of the lane Chubby's pace did lessen and Bee was quickly within reach of the back of the wagon. She resolved to surprise Ring by climbing into the back of the wagon and concealing herself behind the two barrels that she noticed just back of the wagon-seat, so that he would not discover her until he reached his destination.

It was an easy matter for the little girl to grasp the end of the wagon and draw herself up to the wagon floor. A pile of empty bags back of the barrels furnished her a comfortable seat, and Bee smiled happily as she leaned against the barrels and imagined Ring's surprise when she should suddenly appear to him.

As the cart rattled along over the pleasant country road Ring began to sing:

"Summer sky be full ob stars,
Lak' blossoms on de trees,
An' dar's honey in de blossoms
Fer a hunderd milyun bees."

Ring sang the same words over and over and at last Bee found herself singing with him but stopped suddenly when Ring, instead of continuing his song, exclaimed, "Somet'ing queer somewhar. I'se hearin' nudder nigger singin'!"

And now Bee made another resolve: Ring was surely going to Monmouth Court-House and Bee now remembered that she was wearing patched shoes, her faded brown gingham dress, and was bareheaded and that it would never do for her to go to the village in that fashion. "Mother would not like it. I might even meet Madam Freneau there," she reflected, wondering to herself if young Philip Freneau, who wrote poems and who was now on his way home from far-off Jamaica Island, would not soon reach home.

"I must slip out of the wagon at Gray's lane," Bee resolved; "then I can go and visit with Sara and Susanna and ride back when Ring returns," and Bee smiled happily, thinking that the little Gray girls were sure to welcome her.

Sara Gray's birthday came in the same month

as Bee's and they would be eleven years old in July. Susanna was two years younger and while Sara, in spite of her Quaker mother's stern discipline, was as ready for games and adventures as any little girl, Susanna was very demure and quiet. "A real little Quakeress," her mother would approvingly declare.

Bee had made their acquaintance on the first day the little Grays had appeared at school. Their long skirts, square-toed shoes and queerly-shaped bonnets had made some of the children titter in amusement and one boy had called out:

> "Here comes Miss Thee and Miss Thou
> And the Quaker's cow."

And there had been whispers of "Tories," for many New Jersey Quakers had refused to do battle against the English invaders, believing war the greatest of sins. Bee had instantly taken the part of the little Grays and when Sara, who had been taught that "titles" were vain words, called Miss Timmins "Charlotte," and the other pupils had giggled in amusement, Bee had kept a sober face.

Poor Sara had not known what to make of it. Puzzled and ashamed, she looked about the room

and noticing a low open window she ran swiftly toward it, sprang out and fled toward the woods. Bee asked permission to go after her and soon overtook her. The unhappy little Quakeress could hardly believe Bee's explanation of the giggles of the pupils and the amusement of the teacher; that it was because she had called Miss Timmins " Charlotte."

" That's why the children laughed, Sara," she had said. " You can call me Bee, and call all the others by their name, but it's rude to call Miss Timmins anything but Miss Timmins."

" O-oh," wailed Sara. " I didn't mean to be rude. I am a Friend and Friends are not permitted to say *Miss.*"

But Bee had convinced her that at school pupils must do as Miss Timmins said, and hand-in-hand the two little girls had returned to the schoolroom and the wise teacher made no remark upon Sara's sudden leap from the open window.

Bee remembered, too, Sara's look of shocked surprise as she saw all the little girls curtsey to Miss Timmins as they left the schoolroom. "And now Sara makes as pretty a curtsey as any girl in the school," thought Bee, and as she found herself very near the entrance of the Grays' lane, she

carefully lowered herself from the wagon without Ring discovering that he had left a passenger.

Bee looked after him with a little chuckle of satisfaction, then started up the lane toward the low shingled house where the Grays lived.

" I guess Sara and Susanna will be surprised to see me," she thought, reaching into the pocket of her gingham dress to make sure that the two candy gooseberries she had put there that morning were safe.

" It's lucky I did take two, after all," she said aloud, as her brown fingers closed over the paper in which they were wrapped. " Now I can give one to Sara and one to Susanna."

" One what? " questioned a voice so near that Bee gave a startled exclamation and ran a few steps toward the house before she realized that it was Mistress Gray herself who was half-hidden from the lane by the thick growth of currant bushes with which it was bordered; for Friend Gray was thrifty and industrious and raised the finest fruit in that part of Monmouth County.

" Thou needst not be frightened, Melissa. I but asked thee what thou meant to give Sara and Susanna," said Mrs. Gray, or " Elizabeth," as she insisted on being called.

"Oh, I have a candy gooseberry for each of them," replied Bee, looking up at the stern face hidden in the depths of the Quaker bonnet. "They may have them, may they not—Elizabeth?"

Bee hesitated over the "Elizabeth," but Mrs. Gray had so often corrected her for saying "Mistress Gray" that the little girl knew she must not again venture.

"Thou canst give them to me, if thou please," Mrs. Gray responded, "and at some fit season Sara and Susanna shall be told of thy gift and, it may be, taste the candy," and Mrs. Gray reached over the currant bushes as if confident that Bee would promptly hand over the little package.

But Bee shook her head. She was quite sure Mrs. Gray did not mean to give the gooseberries to Sara and Susanna. She had quickly remembered that the little Gray girls were never given pennies to spend at the village store as were other children, and gooseberry balls were too precious a possession for Mistress Gray to take only to hide away in some cupboard. So now the little girl gently shook her head, determined to give the candy to her friends herself.

"I guess I'll keep them," she said slowly and Mrs. Gray's face grew even more stern.

"I fear thou art a wilful and disobedient child. I saw thee slip from the wagon; thou art bareheaded, and I question if thou hast not run away from home. I will not lead thee into falsehood by questions, but thou had best start homeward." Mistress Gray pointed toward the highway and Bee realized that she was being sent home and her face flushed and tears came into her eyes. Sent home by a Quaker, she thought angrily, remembering how often she had heard the people at Monmouth Court-House declare that the New Jersey Quakers were no better than Tories, since they would not help Americans to defend their rights and defeat the English troops sent by King George III to force unjust laws upon the American people.

Without a word Bee wheeled about, ran down the short lane to the highway and turned toward home.

"I'm glad Elizabeth Gray isn't my mother," she thought, recalling the stern, unsmiling face that had regarded her so reprovingly over the top of the hedge of currant bushes.

Bee was now eager to reach home and tell her

mother of her morning's adventure. There had been no harm, she knew, in riding in the back of the wagon for a morning's visit with Sara Gray, and Bee was sure that her own mother would think that there was no harm in Bee's refusal to give Mistress Gray the candy gooseberries. Nevertheless the little girl felt ashamed and unhappy at having been treated as an unwelcome visitor and resolved that she would never again go near the Grays' farm. But she had not gone far when she heard someone calling her name and stopped and looked down the road; but there was no one in sight.

"Bee! Bee Marsh! Wait! Wait a minute," and a small gray-clad figure pushed through the underbrush beside the road and clasped both hands about Bee's arm.

"Oh, Bee! I heard what thee said to my mother and I ran after thee!" panted Sara.

"Your mother sent me home!" Bee responded stiffly, without meeting Sara's pleading glance.

"But I am not to blame, Bee! Thou didst promise to be my friend," and Sara's voice quavered as if she could no longer keep back the tears; then with a sudden pull on Bee's arm she drew her toward the shelter of some small spruce

trees near the road. "Quick, Bee! Quick! Someone is coming," and Bee heard the sound of horses' feet and the jingle of spurs.

"It may be the King's troops," whispered Sara. Before Bee could speak a riderless horse dashed by and a moment later a slim, boyish figure in a scarlet coat crawled from the road where he had fallen, and to the terror and surprise of the two little girls, crept behind the very trees where they had taken shelter.

Before they had time to realize what had happened a party of horsemen swept by. Bee caught a glimpse of their blue coats and knew they were American soldiers in pursuit of the scarlet-coated figure whose runaway horse would lead them on a useless chase.

CHAPTER III

AN ENEMY

For a moment Bee and Sara stared at the stranger, too frightened to speak; and then clasping each other's hands they began to move cautiously toward the road, when a little moan of pain from the huddled figure made them look back. The young soldier made a motion with his hand for them to come near and they both obeyed.

"Art thee hurt?" questioned Sara, a little fearfully.

The young man's face brightened. "Quakers, eh? That's good luck, since you are a peaceful folk and do not want trouble. I am hurt, can't seem to walk; you girls must help. Great Scott, the Yankees are coming back. Run to the road, both of you, and keep them clear from this spot. Quick!" And he gave Sara a sudden push so that she would have fallen had Bee not caught her; but instantly Sara was off toward the highway, drawing Bee with her and talking excitedly.

"We'll walk along just as if we hadn't seen

the English soldier and when the Yankees come after him ——"

"Sara Gray! That redcoat may be one of the soldiers under the Tory Colonel Marrhood," Bee interrupted; for all the spring of 1778, Marrhood had been at the head of marauding expeditions that invaded New Jersey farms and villages and Bee was confident that this red-coated soldier must belong to such a party.

Sara had no time to respond, for the galloping pursuers were now close at hand, and as the girls turned to face them Bee noticed that one of the men was leading a riderless horse.

The riders slowed down as they came up beside the girls. Two of the men were neighboring farmers, both of whom Bee and Sara knew by sight; the others wore the uniform of the American army and one of these leaned from his saddle and fixing his keen eyes upon the girls, said:

"Where did you come from? You were not on the road when we passed a little while ago."

"If thou please, sir, we were hiding behind those spruce trees," Sara replied, pointing directly toward the scrubby trees where the Englishman was now concealed. "We heard thee coming and hid and we have just started forth for

home. Oh, and thou hast caught the runaway!" she exclaimed, pointing to the riderless horse with so innocent an air that Bee stared at her in surprise.

But no one could have devised a better protection for the man in hiding, for one of the Freehold farmers promptly declared:

"Well, what the little Quaker says proves we have come too far. He must have been thrown or jumped from his horse before reaching this spot. Very likely he has managed to get too far away for us to find him."

"Unless he is being hidden by some enemy to American rights," declared the soldier who had questioned Sara, and it seemed to the frightened Bee that he looked straight at her and that his look seemed to accuse her of being such an enemy.

"Come on! We're wasting time," called a stern voice and instantly the party was off at a gallop down the road leading to Middletown, the road over which a few weeks later would march the English troops defeated at the Battle of Monmouth.

"Come, Bee. Come. We must help the poor soldier!" Sara cried eagerly. In response Bee pointed in the direction of the Gray farm and

Sara turned to see her mother coming rapidly toward them. Sara fairly gasped with fright. An English soldier and a group of mounted Americans had not alarmed the little Quakeress but she well knew that her stern mother would not listen to any excuses for disobedience, and Sara had not had permission to leave home.

" Bee! Bee! Don't tell Mother a word about the redcoat. And thou must help him. Thou *must,* Bee! " and not waiting for Bee's reply Sara ran swiftly down the road to meet her mother.

Bee watched the Quakeress and her little daughter turn and walk toward the Gray farm. Not hand-in-hand as Bee and her mother would have walked, but moving on silently side by side. And Bee again told herself that she was glad that Mistress Gray was not her own mother and she felt very sorry for Sara.

" I'm not going to help that man," she whispered to herself. " I ought to have told those soldiers where he was hiding," and Bee turned and looked toward the spruce trees and as she looked a wonderful plan came to her. She would capture the man herself!

" Sara is no better than a Tory and I didn't promise to help him. I'll watch for Ring and

we'll take the English soldier prisoner and maybe we'll take him to General Washington at Valley Forge," thought Bee, as she again moved cautiously toward the place where the stranger was hiding. But as she peered, half-fearfully, around the spruce trees, Bee forgot that this man was one of the enemies of America, against whose invasion her own father was fighting; she forgot her plan to make him a prisoner, for he lay there so quietly with closed eyes that Bee feared to look at him and now thought only of what she could do to help him.

The rattle of an approaching wagon sent her running back to the road.

"It's Ring! It must be!" she said aloud, and in a moment she saw Chubby trotting toward her.

Ring promptly drew rein at the sight of his little mistress waving to him from the roadside.

"Ring, get down quick. There's a man behind those trees; he's hurt; he can't move ——"

"Yo' clim' right up h'ar, Miss M'lissa! Yo' hear me? Dis minute. If dar's a man a-hidin' it's one ob Clinton's armby dat Cunnel Anthony Wayne bin a-chasin' ob! Clim' up!" commanded Ring, his voice trembling with fear as he reached down to assist the little girl.

Bee looked at him in amazement.

" I *can't,* Ring! He's hurt. Maybe he's dead. We must help him. Hurry, Ring! " and Bee's voice sounded so much like the voice of her mother that Ring promptly climbed down from the wagon-seat and silently followed the little girl to where the young soldier lay.

" He ain' dade! " declared Ring, as the young man opened his eyes and gazed up at them, a little moan of pain coming from between his set lips.

" We'll help you; my mother will know just what to do," Bee exclaimed, and Ring's heart softened a little as he realized that the redcoat was only a boy and suffering.

" I reckon I kin back de cart right close an' lif' yo' in," he said, and it was evident that the soldier believed them to be friends as he made no objection but smiled at them gratefully.

As tenderly as possible the old colored man managed to get Bee's " prisoner " into the wagon. It was evident that one of his legs was broken and his right shoulder injured but he did his best to help himself, and Bee wondered how he had ever managed to crawl from the road to the shelter of the closely growing young spruce.

Mrs. Marsh and Dilly were both in the yard when Ring and Bee arrived with the unexpected guest.

"His leg is broken, Mother!" Bee pleaded, but Mrs. Marsh needed no petitions to make her eager and ready to help anyone who suffered. With Dilly's help the young Englishman was carried to a pleasant chamber that opened from the sitting-room and Mrs. Marsh quickly decided that the village doctor must at once be called to set the broken leg, and before sunset the soldier was resting comfortably.

Bee had told her mother the entire story of her visit to the Gray farm and of what had followed; and Mrs. Marsh had listened attentively to her little daughter's account of Sara's eagerness to help the young Englishman.

"I am sure Sara meant that we were to help him escape," explained Bee; "but, Mother, I meant to make him a prisoner and take him to General Washington."

"He is a prisoner now," replied Mrs. Marsh. "It is not possible for him to escape. The doctor has reported to the Captain of the Militia at Monmouth Court-House that the fleeing redcoat is in our house with a broken leg, and when he

can be moved they will come for him. It seems that the others of his party escaped."

Bee could hardly sit quietly as her mother talked and as Mrs. Marsh finished, the little girl ran to her side.

"But, Mother! He is *my* prisoner. Truly he is. I'm sure the Grays or some Tory would have helped him to escape if I had not made Ring bring him here," she declared; "and, Mother, I do not want the militia to take him away. I mean to take him myself to General Washington and then might it not be that Father could come home with me?" and Bee's blue eyes were so earnest and her voice so eager that her mother did not even smile at what seemed so impossible.

She responded thoughtfully, "It is rather a serious thing to be responsible for a prisoner of war, Bee."

"Yes. Yes, Mother! But you said yourself that it would be weeks before he could step. May I not call him my prisoner? And may I not take him to General Washington when he is well enough to travel?" pleaded Bee.

Mrs. Marsh smiled and nodded her consent, thinking that the little girl would soon forget her plan to journey to Valley Forge to deliver an

English prisoner to General Washington. But from that time until the Battle of Monmouth Bee's chief thought was of the day when she should face the great American general and deliver the young Englishman as a prisoner. "Then of course General Washington will say that my father can come home," Bee thought triumphantly, "and he will prob'ly say that I'm a true patriot," and a smile of satisfaction lingered about her mouth as she started up-stairs to bed.

As Bee took off her faded gingham dress one of the pale green candy gooseberries rolled from its pocket.

"I forgot all about you," Bee declared softly as she picked up the candy ball, wiped it carefully on a bit of tissue paper and put it with the other three in the drawer of the light-stand near her bed.

"I'll keep one for Sara and one for Susanna and I guess I'll give one to my prisoner," Bee resolved.

CHAPTER IV

SARA'S SECRET

It was two days after the "capture" of the young Englishman, whose name proved to be Richard Compton, when Sara Gray appeared at the Marsh farm. The day was warm for early May. Bee, wearing her usual dress of gingham, was busy helping Dilly transplant the young strawberry runners in the upper field when she saw Sara coming slowly up the lane and ran to meet her.

"How warm poor Sara must be in that woolen dress and close bonnet and thick shoes," thought Bee as she watched the little figure in the long gray gown, Quaker bonnet and heavy square-toed shoes coming toward her; for, whatever the season, the two little Gray girls always wore the same kind of clothing. Their skirts were so long that they could not run or jump as Bee could and their bonnets prevented them from seeing anything that was not directly in front of them. Bee never saw Sara or Susanna without feeling

sorry for them and now as she ran to meet Sara she called:

"Oh, Sara! I'm so glad you've come. I have lots to tell you. The Tory soldier is safe in our best chamber and ——" Bee was about to add that as soon as he could walk he would be taken to Washington's headquarters when Sara interrupted her:

"And thou will help him to return to his friends as soon as possible. I know thee will, Bee. Thy kind heart makes thee help people," Sara confidently declared, smiling at Bee in so approving a manner that for a moment Bee could not think of a word to say; but she shook her head and at Sara's questioning look spoke quickly:

"He is my prisoner. I am going to take him to General Washington."

Sara's face within the close bonnet flushed angrily. "He is no more your prisoner than mine, Melissa Marsh. 'Tis not for thee to say what shall be done with him. Thou art a godless child at best, and thou walkest in the way of the sinful," announced the small Quaker with a voice and manner so like that of her stern mother that Bee forgot to be angry and giggled cheer-

fully. Then as Sara's round face grew even more accusing Bee began to laugh, stuttering out:

"O-oh, S-Sara! You—o-oh, you look so funnee ——"

"He is just as much my prisoner as he is thine," persisted Sara, "and he shall go where he pleases."

A faint "Hurrah! Hurrah!" startled both the girls who, as they talked, had walked up the lane and were standing close to the open window of the young Englishman's chamber.

"Lieutenant Compton heard you, Sara Gray! And now he'll think you are a Tory," Bee whispered angrily.

Before Sara could make any response the voice called again: "May I not see the little Quaker, Honeybee?" for that very morning the young man had smilingly announced that the Bee family had so many members, such as bumble-bees and hornets, that he must give her a special name. Bee had been quite silent at this. She did not want this enemy of America giving her a friendly nickname. Now she made no reply, but Sara called quickly:

"I will come in and see thee now," and started

toward the door; but instantly Bee grasped her by the arm and began to pull her away from the house.

"If you call out or say a word, Sara Gray, I will never speak to you or to Susanna as long as I live," she threatened.

"For de lan' sake! W'at yo' a-doin' ob, Miss M'lissa? Yo' le' go dat lille gal!" called Dilly, and an instant later the stout negro woman had seized Sara with one hand and Bee with the other and was holding them at arm's length.

"I is mos' too 'shamed ter hol' up my hade!" Dilly mournfully declared. "Yo' orter know yo' manners, Miss M'lissa!" she said reproachfully. "An' yo' ma say she be expectin' Mistress Freneau ter drive ober h'ar ter-day frum Mount Pleasant an' wot yo' tink ——"

"Take thy hand from my shoulder," commanded Sara, and this so surprised Dilly that she did not finish her remark and her grasp weakened so that both Sara and Bee instantly freed themselves and were off, both quite forgetting their anger toward each other in their eagerness to escape Dilly.

"Scrouch under the lilacs," directed Bee and Sara promptly obeyed, though when they crawled

through to the open pasture land Sara's bonnet had been left behind.

Dilly's voice calling after them added swiftness to their pace and they fled down the pasture slope toward a broad stream bordered by a thick growth of tall pines. Here, flushed and out of breath, the two little girls sank down on the fragrant carpet of pine-spills and smilingly faced each other, rejoicing in their escape from Dilly's scolding.

It was several moments before Sara realized the loss of her bonnet; her yellow hair was cut short and grew in soft curls all over her head and Bee now exclaimed:

"Oh, Sara! Your hair is just like gold shavings." And it was this remark that made Sara touch her hair and realize that she was bareheaded. She was evidently too frightened to speak as she turned a questioning glance toward her companion and Bee understood instantly.

"I guess your bonnet came off when we crawled under the lilacs. We can find it all right," she assured Sara; "and it's so warm you'll be a lot more comfortable without it." Bee shook her own bare head to show how useless a hat or bonnet was on this bright spring day.

It was indeed a pleasant spot where the two little girls had found shelter. The grove of tall pines gave out their fragrance in the spring sunshine and their feathery branches swayed gently in the little breeze that now and then drifted across them. From where Bee and Sara sat the ground sloped sharply down to a wide brook bordered with young ferns and drooping alder bushes and on the further side of the stream was woodland.

"I hate that bonnet!" Sara declared suddenly. "It makes me feel as if I was shut up in a cage. And this long, hot dress! I hate that, too," and Sara's blue eyes rested upon Bee as if her companion were in some way to blame for the little Quaker's uncomfortable garments.

But Bee nodded understandingly. "Take off the dress, Sara! And the shoes. It's so hot and nobody will see us. And we'll go in wading. Oh, Sara! Isn't it splendid that we ran straight to this brook?" and as she talked Bee was eagerly unlacing her own shoes and removing her stockings, and Sara quickly followed her example, then slipped out of the woolen dress. But even with the removal of the gray dress the little Quakeress was still enclosed in a long-sleeved, long-

skirted garment of unbleached cotton at which Bee stared in amazement, as her own skirts were ruffled with nainsook or linen ruffles edged with hand-knit lace.

"Oh, Bee! I'd like to live out-of-doors!" declared the delighted Sara, skipping about as freely as her clumsy clothing would permit and leading the way down the slope over the thick slippery carpet of pine-needles, eager to be the first to reach the brook.

Beyond the ferns was a little stretch of sand and the girls, carefully holding up their skirts, waded out into the cool water. Trees on both sides hung well over the stream, sunlight filtered through the branches in glimmering threads of gold and from the woodland came the song of catbirds, robins and song-sparrows. The fragrance of the pines mingled with that of wild flowers growing near the brook and it was no wonder that Bee and Sara forgot about Quakers, redcoats, even Dilly, in their delight in the May warmth, in the cool water and in their freedom.

At first they waded very carefully, keeping close to the shore and going along with the slow moving water; then Bee began to kick the water ahead of her, at first cautiously but gradually

with more and more enthusiasm, calling out, "Look, Sara! I can make it like soap-suds!"

"So can I," laughed Sara happily and the two girls fairly danced along the brook, calling to each other, laughing delightedly when they succeeded in splashing the water a longer distance than usual.

Sara had never before been in wading; she had never before really played as Bee was accustomed to play and she was sure that she had never been as happy; but all her delight ended at the high moment when by a skilful kick she had sent a spray of water higher than her own head; she lost her balance and splashed down in an unexpectedly deep pool!

"Bee! Bee! Bee!" she screamed, as she struggled to get her footing. Bee quickly grasped her by the shoulders and in a moment Sara was safely standing in shallow water, trying to wring the water from the straight, unbleached cotton garment that hung about her.

Bee, too, was as thoroughly soaked as if she had fallen in the stream; and for a moment the two little girls looked at each other with serious faces; then suddenly they both began to laugh and Bee exclaimed: "We look like frogs!"

"Or ducks!" responded Sara, who added quickly, "I don't care if I did fall over. Let's wade right across the brook."

"Come on!" agreed Bee; and now clasping each other's hands the two little girls splashed across the stream. As they looked up through the woodland Bee noticed an open clearing where the sunshine lay warm and inviting.

"We could get nice and dry there in the sun," she suggested.

Sara agreed eagerly and the girls clambered over an old log and made their way to the sunny clearing, stretched themselves on the warm grass, sure that it would take but a short time for their garments to become perfectly dry.

"Wouldn't it be nice if we had brought something to eat," Bee suggested, a little wistfully, for she had suddenly remembered that Madam Freneau, whose home was ten miles from Monmouth Court-House, was coming for a visit with Mrs. Marsh. "Mother is going to have fried chicken and rice with cream gravy and hot biscuit and apple jelly," she said, naming each dish slowly. "I guess we'd better go home, Sara," she concluded, jumping up and shaking herself as if to hasten the drying of her limp skirts.

Sara got up more slowly and looked down at her bedraggled garments as if she had not before realized their condition. She kept close behind Bee as she made her way across the clearing and through the woods to the brook, and not until they had crossed the stream did the little Quaker girl speak. Bee was occupied with her own thoughts, so eager to reach home in time to have dinner with Madam Freneau that she did not notice Sara's troubled face or her silence. Afterward Bee was to remember these things and wish that she had not been so intent on her own affairs and had thought about Sara's difficulties, for Sara's silence meant that she was realizing that it would be difficult to explain to her mother not only her long absence from home but the fact that the unbleached cotton slip was damp, that there was a rent in the gray woolen skirt and that her bonnet was missing. When she could not find one of her stout leather shoes Sara's efforts toward courage ended and she threw herself face downward on the fragrant pine-spills and wailed bitterly.

"Oh, what will I do! What will I do?"

"Why, Sara Gray! You know your shoe couldn't have walked off by itself. It must be

here; you'll find it. I can't wait for you. I'll be late now," Bee impatiently responded, thinking of the big platter of fried chicken and wondering if her mother had already told Madam Freneau that the Tory soldier was her prisoner. " You'll find it," she called back and, eager to reach home as soon as she could, Bee hurried off across the pasture, leaving the unhappy Sara to meet her troubles as best she could.

For a few moments Sara did not stir. At Bee's departure she had stopped crying and when she realized that Bee had really left her alone she sat up and looked sharply about for some trace of the missing shoe but it was not to be found. She wondered vainly if some enterprising squirrel had dragged it away or if some weasel or other small marauding animal had made off with it. In any event it had disappeared and this seemed to Sara a final stroke of misfortune. She began to wonder what she could do to avoid her mother's displeasure.

" I must find my shoe," she whispered, " and then I'll go back and find my bonnet. I won't go home until I do," and with this resolve Sara began a new search among the trees for the missing shoe.

CHAPTER V

SARA'S BONNET

WHEN Bee reached home she saw that her mother's visitor had already arrived, for the Freneau chaise was standing in the yard and Bing, Madam Freneau's coachman, was talking with Ring.

"Yas, de British am a-plunderin' all de cattle an' a-burnin' houses all fru' Salem County!" Bing announced just as the little girl came within hearing.

"Dey better not cum' nigh dese parts," Ring valiantly responded. "If dey do Gen'l Philemon Dickinson an' de militia'll ten' to 'em."

Bee did not stop to hear more, nor was she frightened by the news Bing had declared, for raiding parties from Philadelphia, where the British army were in control in the spring of 1778, had more than once come up the Delaware. Only a week earlier General Dickinson had driven back a marauding expedition from its attempt on Trenton, and Bee was now thinking chiefly of the appetizing dinner that must be

nearly ready, hoping to have time to put on her blue linen frock and her white stockings and kid ankle-ties before meeting Madam Freneau. As she brushed her hair and changed her dress she heard Dilly's voice calling, "Miss M'lissa! Miss M'liss-a-a-a!" and this time Bee called back, "Coming, Dilly!" and even forgot to be angry at Dilly's persistence in calling her by the name "Melissa," although Bee knew that was really her proper name, and that "Bee" was only, as her sister Nancy declared, a baby name.

As the little girl entered the dining-room and made her pretty curtsey to the smiling guest she had for the moment entirely forgotten Sara. Madam Freneau's pleasant greeting made Bee flush with pleasure, for everyone near Monmouth Court-House was proud if Madam Freneau honored them with her approval. She lived in one of the finest houses in that vicinity, with a large number of devoted colored servants, and, although often in danger from the raiding parties of both American and British armies, she valiantly refused to leave her home.

"So you have captured a redcoat, Melissa," she said in greeting, as Bee took her place at the table. "I could wish that all Americans might

do likewise. I do believe General Washington will soon conquer our invaders. Now that the French have become our allies and their fleet will soon come to our aid the English cannot stand against our righteous cause."

" 'Tis said the English officers have danced and played all winter in Philadelphia while Washington and our brave Americans have starved at Valley Forge," said Bee's mother, and Madam Freneau agreed saying:

" I hear it said also that while our enemy dance and play, our soldiers march and drill and make ready for war and that is as it should be. What do you plan to do with the young redcoat, Melissa? " she added, turning again to Bee.

" If you please, when he can walk I shall take him to General Washington's headquarters and ask if my father may not come home," replied Bee.

"An excellent plan," Madam declared. Then opening a silken bag that hung from her belt she drew out a folded paper and handed it to the little girl.

" I have copied a couple of Philip's verses for you," she said with a smiling nod.

Bee thanked her delightedly, for Philip

Freneau's poems in the early days of America's struggle to free herself from Britain's dominion had cheered the soldiers, and the young man was declared to be the most impressive of American poets of revolutionary days.

"You might read this to the young Tory," Madam smilingly added, accepting a second helping of creamed gravy and dumpling.

When dinner was over Mrs. Marsh and her guest stepped out on the broad porch while Bee lingered near one of the windows of the dining-room to read the verses. Almost unconsciously the little girl read the lines aloud:

"When a certain great King, whose initial is G,
Forces stamps upon paper, and folks to drink tea;
When these folks burn his tea and stampt paper, like stubble,—
You may guess that this King is then coming to trouble.
But when a *Petition* he treads under feet,
Sending over the ocean an army and fleet,
And when army and fleet alike soon will be taken,
This King will do well if he saves his own bacon.
The face of the Lion will soon become pale,
He shall yield fifteen teeth and be sheared of his tail ——"

"W'ot yo' readin' off'n dat paper, Miss

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M'lissa? De littlest ob Mistress Gray's lille gals be a-waitin' ter ask 'bout her sister!" said Dilly, coming into the room with little Susanna Gray close behind her. At the sight of Susanna, Bee's delight in Philip Freneau's verses, her satisfaction in the excellent dinner and her pleasure in Madam Freneau's approval promptly vanished as she remembered that she had actually run away and left Sara alone in the pine woods.

"Isn't Sara at home?" she asked, as little Susanna, her hands meekly folded, stood waiting for Bee to explain Sara's absence.

Susanna shook her head slowly, but did not speak.

"Whar yo' leab dis lille gal's sister?" Dilly demanded. "An' wot was yo' a-quarrelin' 'bout w'en I 'peared?" and Dilly cast a disapproving glance toward Bee.

"My mother says that Sara is to come directly home," Susanna announced.

"She must be there before this time. I'm sure she must," declared Bee, as Dilly, receiving no answers to her questions, left the girls to themselves.

But little Susanna shook her head soberly.

"I came straight here and I did not meet Sara

on the road. It is well past dinner-time and Mother is ill-pleased with Sara," she explained.

" I think Sara would go home across the pastures; I'm sure that she would," Bee eagerly explained, " because I left her at the pine woods. So, you see, Susanna, she must be at home by this time."

" Mother does not permit us to go through the pastures. What was Sara doing at the pine grove? " questioned Susanna and her reproving voice reminded Bee of Mistress Gray's, making her feel as if Susanna was much the older instead of being two years younger. She wished that she had stayed to help Sara search for the missing shoe and the lost sunbonnet, and had started her visitor safely toward home.

But she now told herself that all she could do was to convince Susanna that her sister must have reached home. " Of course she is at home," Bee insisted and at last the doubting Susanna marched soberly off down the lane, leaving Bee anxious and worried, for she was by no means sure that Sara was safely at home.

" I'll go and see if her bonnet is under the lilacs. I know that's where Sara lost it and if the bonnet is gone then Sara came after it and everything's

all right," thought Bee, as she went toward the porch.

Mrs. Freneau and Bee's mother were sitting on the porch, both busy with their knitting, for all sorts of supplies were needed for the American troops and the women of New Jersey worked faithfully to provide stockings, shirts and everything possible for the aid of their soldiers. Even girls the age of Bee did much to help in this work and Bee herself had knit many a pair of stockings for her absent father.

As she crossed the porch Madam Freneau nodded smilingly and Mrs. Marsh asked, " What was Susanna Gray's errand, my dear? "

" She came after Sara," Bee replied and before her mother could ask another question Bee was running across the yard to where the lilac bushes made a thick hedge between the yard and the pasture land and where she quickly discovered Sara's bonnet swinging from one of the low-growing branches.

For a moment Bee stood looking at that ugly-shaped bonnet that always seemed to shut Sara away from the world, then she placed it on her own head and started off in the direction of the pines.

"Sara prob'ly couldn't find her shoe," thought Bee, as she hurried along over the rough pasture.

"My ankle-ties will be all scrubbed and spoiled," she whispered to herself as she stumbled over a half-covered ledge, "but I must get Sara started for home before her mother comes after her," and at the thought of the appearance of Mistress Gray and what she would probably say Bee hurried on more rapidly than before.

When she reached the pines she began to call, "Sara! Sara!" and the name echoed back through the air until it seemed to Bee that a chorus of voices was shouting her friend's name and she did not hear the sound of approaching footsteps until a gruff voice made her turn quickly to discover close beside her a towering figure wearing a brass-fronted cap, a scarlet coat, with collar and cuffs of buff, white breeches and long, black leggins.

"This wood be full of Quaker maids," declared the Hessian, scowling down at Bee, who gazed up in amazement and dislike, for the Hessians, unlike the English soldiers, were not fighting for their own country's cause or because of their convictions that England was right in her demands on America; they were a body of Ger-

man soldiers hired by England to fight against Americans. Bee had often heard her mother speak of them with horror and contempt, and she had also heard from visiting friends that many Hessians were deserting the British cause and endeavoring to make friends with Americans.

"You have not as much to say for yourself, little maid, as the other little Quakeress whose shoe I found for her," continued the man in a more gentle tone. "She tells me the young lieutenant I'm searching for has broken his leg and that when he can walk he'll return to his friends."

"Sara said that? Well, she doesn't know ——" Bee began angrily, but suddenly realized that it would never do to tell this Hessian that his young lieutenant was really a prisoner.

"I take it the lieutenant is with friends and 'tis not wise for me to show myself on the highway so I'll scribble a message and a bit of good news to him," said the soldier. Drawing a leather-covered note-book and a pencil from a pocket he wrote quickly, tore out the written pages, folded them carefully and handed them to Bee, saying:

"Here, little maid. Give this to Lieutenant

Compton. 'Twill help him to get well more quickly to hear good news. But see to it that none of these rebel Americans get hold of it. I'll venture to trust a Quaker maid," and the man nodded in friendly fashion as he handed Bee the message for the young officer.

Bee seized it instantly, thrusting it carefully into the pocket of her linen skirt, then turning toward the tall Hessian, she said, " 'Tis the bonnet you have trusted," and with a light laugh Bee darted off among the close growing pine trees, and was racing across the pasture land toward home before the Hessian had recovered from his surprise.

" ' Trusted the bonnet! ' " he repeated to himself. " But of course! 'Tis the mark of a Quaker maid. What meant the child? " Then deciding that her words were of small matter and that he was fortunate to have found a friendly messenger to take his note to the British lieutenant, the big Hessian lumbered off to join his companions at their camp on the Jersey shore.

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CHAPTER VI

NEW RESOLVES

Bee had feared the Hessian might pursue her and not until she was half-way across the pasture did she stop to look back.

"He could not have caught me anyway," she thought, but nevertheless the little girl drew a long breath of satisfaction at the fact that the dreaded Hessian was not to be seen. Walking now, instead of racing at her utmost speed, Bee took off Sara's bonnet and looked at it smilingly.

"I guess it's lucky I wore it," she thought, remembering that the Hessian had trusted her with this message that was now deep in her pocket because of the Quaker bonnet.

"I wonder what Mistress Gray said to Sara because of her coming home without her bonnet," thought Bee as she once more came in sight of the house. "I'll leave the bonnet on the lilac bush," she decided, "so if Sara comes to look for it she can find it."

When Bee reached the house flushed and tired,

eager to tell the story of her encounter with the Hessian and to show her mother and Madam Freneau the message he had given her, she was surprised to find that Madam had already started for home and that her mother was seriously displeased.

"I knew not what to say, Melissa, when our guest asked what had taken you from home," said Mrs. Marsh. "After she had taken the trouble to copy one of her son's poems for you, you go racing off with hardly a word to spare. I fear I am but a poor mother to you, since you have no grace of manners toward our guest," she concluded with so grave a look that Bee forgot the startling events of the day and her adventure in meeting the Hessian, remembering only that she had failed, as Dilly would say, to "mind her manners," and toward the guest whom best of all visitors Bee liked to welcome.

But the rustle of the paper in the pocket of her linen dress gave her a moment's comfort.

"Mother! Mother! I didn't mean to be rude. Truly I didn't! But I had to find Sara's bonnet and it's lucky I did, because I put it on and that made the Hessian think I was a little Quaker maid ——"

Mrs. Marsh listened in amazement to the story Bee poured forth so eagerly, and when the little girl drew from her pocket the note the Hessian had entrusted to her and Mrs. Marsh saw that it was addressed to "Lieut. R. Compton" she looked at Bee in such evident surprise that the child laughed aloud and exclaimed:

"And the man bade me not let any 'rebel American' get this message. What did he write, Mother?"

"I like not to read a letter intended for another person. 'Tis like listening at a keyhole," said Mrs. Marsh thoughtfully, "but in days like these when our enemies do not spare us it may be well to read a message such as this." She unfolded the paper and read aloud what the Hessian had so hurriedly written. He told of a successful raid at White Hill, and of cannonading the undefended town of Burlington. But it was the end of the letter that was of the deepest importance.

"Get thee well speedily," the Hessian had written, "for our army will shortly leave Philadelphia for New York and we'll march by the place where you now rest and take you with us."

"Mother! What will we do?" Bee whispered, for the little girl as well as her mother knew that

the King's troops pillaged and destroyed as they marched.

" But General Washington's army will not let them march through New Jersey," the little girl added.

" If he only knew the route they mean to take and could give them battle," said Mrs. Marsh.

" But, Mother! Mother! Does not the Hessian's note tell the way they will march! Right by this house," Bee exclaimed.

" Yes, Bee. But how can General Washington know that? He is at Valley Forge, and we have no one to send with this information," Mrs. Marsh replied. " The English have their scouts everywhere and if a messenger succeeded in reaching Valley Forge he might find that Washington was already on the march, as rumors say he plans."

" May I not take the message to General Washington? May I not, Mother? No one would harm a little maid," pleaded Bee, " and perhaps I could see Father."

But Mrs. Marsh shook her head. Not for a moment would she consider permitting her little daughter to venture on so dangerous an errand.

" Why, Bee! 'Tis not to be thought of. I could

only wish I had sent you with Nancy to Princeton," she answered, " but say nothing of what the Hessian has written, nor speak to anyone of your encounter with him. I would not have this English soldier know of it. Do not let Dilly or Ring hear a word of it, or they will be too frightened to attend to their work. It may well be that, after all, General Clinton will find he cannot choose his route," said Mrs. Marsh, turning toward a small table between the two front windows, and putting the Hessian's note in its upper drawer.

Bee leaned back in the corner of the well-cushioned settle as her mother left the room. The little girl was more tired than she had realized by her adventurous day; but she was glad that the Hessian had not given Sara the note. She closed her eyes, smiling a little as she remembered how easily the Hessian had been misled by Sara's bonnet. But, after all, the news he had written was of no use, thought Bee, unless it could reach General Washington before the British army left Philadelphia, and her mother had said there was no one who could carry the message. Bee knew that there were few men in the neighborhood who could be spared to start on so uncertain an errand.

" If Nancy were only home she would think of a way," thought Bee, who was always sure that her tall, gray-eyed sister was more clever than any other girl could even hope to be.

" But I might just as well hope that General Washington or Lafayette or General Anthony Wayne would come riding up and ask for the Hessian's note as to hope for Nancy," the little girl whispered to herself.

The warm May air swayed the muslin window curtains; the fragrance of blossoming lilacs, of lilies-of-the-valley, and of garden herbs came pleasantly through the open windows; song-sparrows and robins sang from their chosen trees and war and all its dangers seemed far distant from so peaceful a scene. But in a neighboring room lay the helpless English prisoner and in the table drawer was the Hessian's note telling that very soon the English troops would begin their march across New Jersey; and Bee, lying on the old settle, grew more and more determined that a way must be found to forward the news that note contained to those in command of the American army.

But when Dilly called her to supper Bee was as puzzled as ever and not even the hot chocolate,

with its froth of whipped cream, the appetizing corn cake or the freshly baked gingerbread could make her forget the letter that rested in the upper drawer of the table between the sitting-room windows.

When they had finished supper Bee surprised her mother by saying, " Mother, do you still wish me to go to Princeton? And if you do could I go to-morrow? "

For a moment Mrs. Marsh was too amazed to speak. Bee had so vehemently refused every suggestion of leaving her mother alone that this sudden change made Mrs. Marsh wonder if, at the thought of the advancing army of the enemy, Bee had become frightened and wanted to go where there was less danger; although, as Mrs. Marsh well knew, all New Jersey would be in peril until the enemy was driven from the country.

" To Princeton? " Mrs. Marsh repeated. " But, dear child, the question cannot be decided so easily nor is it possible for a little maid to make so long a journey alone; and I know of no one now venturing along the highways who could take you."

" Does not the coach leave Monmouth Court-

House to-morrow and could I not go in that?" pleaded Bee.

But Mrs. Marsh shook her head.

"The coach leaves at sunrise. 'Twould mean making all preparations to-night, starting off a full hour before sunrise, and 'tis now nearly dusk. Think no more of it, Bee. You are as safe here as there; and 'tis but a week since you declared you meant to stay and protect me," and Mrs. Marsh put her arm about her little daughter's shoulder, feeling confident that Bee's request was but the impulse of a moment and of no consequence.

"I do not wonder that you are sleepy, dear child," she said a few minutes later when Bee, declaring she must go to bed, bade her mother an affectionate good-night, lighted her candle and went slowly up the narrow stairway to the small chamber over the front door where she had slept ever since she was a tiny girl.

The room had but one window which opened directly over the vine-covered porch, and from it one could see the tall pine trees against the western sky. There was a cushioned seat beneath the window and Bee's white-covered bed was on its right. On the left of the window stood a small

chest of drawers, on which Bee set her candlestick. Over the chest hung a narrow mirror in a frame of dark wood. There were two wooden chairs in the room, a wash-stand with a shallow bowl and tall pitcher of blue earthenware and a rack holding fresh, hand-woven towels. In one corner of the room were two small rocking-chairs painted a bright yellow and in each of these chairs rested a doll; and Bee's eyes turned to these dolls as soon as she entered the room.

"I wish I could take you, Emmeline and Rosalind," she whispered, kneeling down beside them and smoothing their silken skirts, "but I can't," she added quickly, "for I must go as fast as I can or I won't get to Monmouth Court-House in time."

For Bee had resolved to take the Hessian's note to Washington. The coach that left Monmouth Court-House each Thursday morning at five o'clock would, she knew, carry her a good part of the distance, and the little girl had no doubt that she could find her way without difficulty. She realized that the walk to Monmouth Court-House must be taken long before sunrise, and she at once began preparations for her journey.

" Ten shillings will be enough to pay my coach fare and more than enough," she thought as she counted the ten carefully hoarded silver shillings, one for each birthday, that Dilly had given her and that Bee kept in a small purse of blue knitted silk. She put this purse in her pocket and opening the drawer of the light-stand took out the paper with the candy gooseberries, and with a little smile added those to the contents of the pocket.

From one of the bureau drawers Bee took several neatly folded handkerchiefs, a comb and a pair of white knitted stockings. These she carefully tied in a white towel and felt that she was now ready for the journey. She decided that it would not be wise to go to bed for she might oversleep. She would wait until her mother had retired, then secure the Hessian's letter and be off.

" Mother won't know I've gone until I am a long way off and I'll be home in two days maybe and then she'll be glad that I've taken the message to Washington," thought Bee, as she extinguished the candle and sat down by the window to wait until she could be sure it was safe for her to start.

CHAPTER VII

BEE LOSES THE MESSAGE

The night was clear and lit by many stars and fragrant with many growing flowers and blossoming shrubs; and Bee, sitting on the broad-cushioned seat under the open window, looked up at the procession of stars: The Constellation of Orion, with his Sword Belt of three stars of equal magnitude, and following close behind Orion, "hunter of the skies," came Sirius, the Great Dog Star. Not far away shone the Pleiades, fleeing before Sirius, and Bee recalled the story her father had told her that this group of stars had once been seven sisters and that Jupiter, in answer to their prayers for protection, turned them into pigeons and then to secure their safety made them a constellation in the sky. Bee knew that the brightest star in the little group was called Alcyone and she softly repeated the musical name and wished that it was her own name instead of "Melissa"; and with her mind filled with these pleasant thoughts Bee quite forgot the tremendous undertaking she had resolved upon.

At last, her head resting against the window-frame, her eyes closed to the beauty of the sky and she went fast asleep.

The night closed about the quiet house where no one wakened save the English prisoner, who lay staring out into the shadows, thinking of his far-off home across the seas and wondering if it could be possible that these American soldiers might, after all, defeat the invading army of England.

The clock struck two and Bee suddenly awoke. For a moment she was sure she was still in dream-land, for what could she be doing sitting up at that hour? But she quickly remembered and gave a little shiver at the thought of how easily she might have slept on until broad daylight. Already the darkness was less dense; a little breeze was moving about the garden and the sleepy note of an awakened bird sounded through the stillness.

Bee picked up her small bundle and tiptoed across her room, opened the door and moved noiselessly through the shadowy hall and down the stairs. If only the door to the sitting-room was open, she thought, remembering that it always squeaked noisily.

"But I'll have to risk it," she whispered to herself, as her groping hands found the closed door.

Very slowly Bee raised the latch and pushed against it. "Squeak—squeak," went the hinges, and from the adjoining room Lieutenant Compton's wakeful ears caught the sound. Lifting his head from his hot pillow he listened, wondering who could be stirring in the house at that hour! He could not hear Bee's cautious steps as she made her way to the table but he heard a sudden clatter as of something overturned, for Bee had knocked over her mother's work-basket and the spools and scissors fell noisily and Bee stood trembling with fear that her mother, from the chamber directly over the sitting-room, would surely be awakened and come hurrying down to discover what had happened.

"And she would never let me go; I know she wouldn't," Bee whispered to herself; "but if I don't, General Washington may take the wrong road and not find out that General Clinton's army means to march by Monmouth Court-House." But no sound came from the upper chamber.

"Must have been the cat," decided the young

lieutenant and with a little sigh was about to sink back on his pillow when he saw a little figure move quickly past his window.

It was too shadowy for him to be sure; but he wondered about the noises and the dim fleeing figure until he sank into uneasy slumber and when he awoke fancied it a part of his dreams, until later in the day Dilly, bringing his breakfast, told him that " Miss M'lissa ain' in her room, ain' no place; an' her ma has set forth to fin' her! " The lieutenant wondered what could have made a girl like Bee run away from home and questioned Dilly who, beginning to feel the young Englishman was not an enemy but an unfortunate member of the family, readily answered his questions.

" I reckon Miss M'lissa hab put forth for Princeton to see her sister," she declared; " anyhow Mistuss am on de way to meet up wid de coach and fin' out."

Bee had easily secured the letter and made her way out of the house without further mishap.

As she turned toward the lane she suddenly realized that she was bareheaded. " I can't go back; what will I do? " she thought, standing near the lilac bushes, half-tempted to give up her

plan, for Bee knew that a little bareheaded girl would be stared at, questioned and perhaps refused as a passenger in the coach; but to go back to her room for her hat would take time, and she might be discovered.

The little breeze moved the lilac bushes, a branch swayed toward the little girl touching her shoulder and Bee turned quickly and exclaimed aloud, "Sara's bonnet!" and in a moment the gray bonnet was safely tied over Bee's brown hair and she was running down the familiar lane to the highway.

It was three miles to Monmouth Court-House where the coach received passengers and Bee knew she would have plenty of time to reach there long before five o'clock. The little girl did not mean to take the coach there, but to go by a wood-road that turned in near the Grays' lane and came out on the highway half a mile beyond Monmouth.

It was not long before the darkness faded into gray and when Bee reached the place where she was to turn into the wood-road long rays of light were creeping up the eastern sky, birds were singing from the woodlands and day was close at hand.

Bee trudged sturdily along the rough road knowing that no one was likely to come that way at so early an hour. She stopped at a moss-covered log for a brief rest and wished she had brought something to eat; then remembering the candy gooseberries, she drew the package from the deep pocket of her linen dress and put one in her mouth, nodding her head with satisfaction as she discovered its flavor was clove. Then she went on her way hoping that her absence from home might not be discovered until it was too late to overtake the coach.

"Chubby could never catch up; he's too fat and slow," Bee thought, hoping her mother would not be very troubled, and would understand that her little daughter had thought only of helping the men who had undergone hardships, even the torture of hunger and lack of every necessity, at Valley Forge during the preceding winter of 1777.

Bee stopped to pick checkerberry leaves and nibbled them hungrily; she ate a second gooseberry and stopped again to rest. The sun was up now and it began to seem a long way. There were no houses on this road and Bee began to hurry as the rough track ran down a steep hill-

side through a thick growth of spruce and hemlock trees.

Just before reaching the highway there was a clearing and from it Bee could look toward Monmouth Court-House. Coming along at a rattling pace was the coach, its four gray horses covering the ground as if to make up for lost time. The driver from his high seat was swinging his long-lashed whip to encourage their pace, while the big coach swayed and lumbered like a ship at sea.

For a second Bee stared in amazement for she knew the coach would pass long before she could reach the highway. She had loitered too long and she now began to run down the slope at her utmost speed, frantically gesturing and hoping that the driver would see her.

"Stop! Stop!" she shouted from time to time, and by a happy chance the driver of the coach happened to catch a glimpse of the little blue figure racing down the cleared slope. Although he could not hear her voice he was sure she was hurrying to meet the coach, and he drew rein and shouted:

"Come on, little Quaker, we'll wait." And when Bee, flushed and nearly too tired to run

another step, reached the coach he leaned down and regarded her smilingly.

"Where bound?" he asked, as the coach door was opened by its solitary passenger and Bee started to enter.

"Get in. Don't keep us waiting. We're late now," said a high-pitched voice and Bee felt her arm firmly grasped and she was pulled into the coach before she could reply to the driver's question. By the time she had seated herself the horses were again off at their best speed and it was several minutes before Bee had courage to look about her.

She had managed to push herself well back on the broad seat and holding the towel-wrapped bundle on her lap she ventured to look at her companion, a tall, thin man dressed in homespun, who was scowling at Bee's bonnet.

"No better than Tories," Bee heard him mutter and she thrust her hand into her pocket to make sure that the Hessian's note was safe.

The man heard the rustle of paper and had noticed her gesture. He nodded his head as if convinced that he had made a discovery.

"You carry a message, do you not, little maid?" he asked, endeavoring to make his voice

friendly and Bee nodded her head as she replied:

"Why, yes, sir; I think it may prove a message."

"And do you go far?" continued the man, his small eyes fixed upon her as if he meant to discover her very thoughts.

"I do not know ——" Bee was about to say that she did not know how far the coach could take her on her way, when suddenly there was the sound of galloping horses, shouts of "Halt," and a moment later the coach came to a sudden standstill, the door was roughly opened and a red-coated soldier leaned in.

"Ha! Only a couple of Quakers!" he called out. "But out with you; there may be a mail pouch for the rebels!"

Bee was out of the coach before the soldier had finished speaking; and the man in homespun, dragging a large basket, was close behind her. Instantly the two soldiers seized upon him, turning his pockets inside out and then turning to his basket that proved to be well-filled with excellent food over which the soldiers exclaimed in satisfaction.

"A fine ham, crisp from the oven, as I live!"

declared the soldier who had opened the basket, " good bread and butter and seed cake," he continued as he set the food out on the grass beside the road, " and jars of jelly! Why, 'tis a feast, and meant for a rebel camp, I'll wager! "

The English soldier was right, for the man in homespun was bound to Valley Forge to join the American army and this basket of food had been intended as a gift for General Washington.

Bee looked at the brown loaves of bread, thinking how much she would like a thick slice, well spread with butter and jelly, and she did not notice that the man in homespun was very close to her, nor that his thin fingers were in her pocket closing about the Hessian's letter; but as he drew it out a jerk of her skirt made her look down just in time to clutch at his hand. But it was too late; he had the message, had leaped into the woods and was off before the English soldiers had time to send a shot after him.

" He'll bring a hornet's nest of Americans after us! Cut those coach horses loose and be off with 'em and the coachman as well," directed the leader.

" What about this little maid? " questioned one of the men, turning toward Bee.

"We cannot bother with her; make haste," commanded the officer, and in a few minutes, taking with them the food and the gray coach-horses and their driver, the soldiers had dashed off down the highway, leaving Bee standing beside the deserted coach.

CHAPTER VIII

A WAYSIDE PICNIC

As the little cavalcade vanished from sight Bee sank down on the grass not knowing what to do. Her thoughts centered about the letter that the man in homespun had secured and Bee was ready to cry with disappointment, for at first she felt sure he was an enemy. Then she recalled his scowling glance at her Quaker bonnet and his muttered words against Tories. "I do believe he was himself journeying to Washington's camp," Bee whispered to herself, a smile creeping over her sober face. "And he believed me a Tory maid carrying some message," and Bee chuckled to herself, realizing that the man would lose no time in taking the Hessian's letter to Washington's camp as rapidly as possible.

"But I do wish I had something to eat," she thought, remembering how eagerly the English soldiers had seized on the food, breaking the loaves in bits and hacking with their knives at the well-cooked ham.

She walked toward the coach looking carefully

about, hoping for some remnant of the food and exclaiming delightedly when she discovered the end of a broken loaf and some bits of the ham. These she ate hungrily and wished she could have a long drink of cool water. But Bee realized that she was too tired to search for a brook or spring.

"I'll just climb into the coach and rest and then I'll walk back to Monmouth Court-House and go home," she decided, thinking how fortunately everything had happened.

"The message will go faster than I could have carried it," Bee thought as she lay down on the broad seat of the coach with Sara's gray bonnet resting beside her and almost instantly the little girl was fast asleep.

Mrs. Marsh had discovered her little daughter's absence at an early hour and also that the Hessian's letter had vanished, and instantly understood what had happened.

"Melissa has started to carry that letter to General Washington," she thought; and finding that Bee had taken her treasured silver shillings her mother concluded that the adventurous girl meant to journey as far as possible by coach.

"And more than one coach has been halted by

bands of the enemy and passengers taken prisoners," Mrs. Marsh reflected anxiously, fearful of the dangers that might overtake Bee, especially with such a letter as the Hessian's in her possession. "I should have locked up that letter and forbidden Melissa to leave the farm," thought Mrs. Marsh, as she made hurried preparations to start after the runaway. But when she reached Monmouth Court-House it was nine o'clock and the coach had been gone for hours; and the storekeeper assured her there had only been one passenger.

"Peter Vinal, who is off to join the army," the storekeeper said.

Mrs. Marsh was puzzled by this, wondering if Bee had walked on and been overtaken by the coach. But she was resolved not to return home until she found Bee or had some news of her and started on, urging Chubby to a much faster pace than usual. It was fortunate that the English soldiers had stopped the coach so soon after Bee had taken passage or her mother's journey would have been much longer. As it was it was well past noon when, with an exclamation of fright, Mrs. Marsh saw, drawn up by the roadside, a deserted coach.

She drove slowly toward it. No one was to be seen and Mrs. Marsh decided it would be safe to stop. She wondered if she might not discover some trace of Bee. She drove Chubby on the grassy stretch of ground beyond the coach and fastened him to a wayside tree. For a moment she looked about, fearful that some enemy might be concealed in the near-by woodland. But there was no sound or sight of any moving figure and Mrs. Marsh walked toward the coach, noticing where horsemen had trampled the grass and discovering the overturned basket.

"They have taken Peter Vinal and the coachman prisoner and made off with the coach horses," she thought, looking toward the empty coach whose door was swung wide open.

Mrs. Marsh was about to return to her wagon and drive on when she heard a faint sound from the coach and glanced in.

"Bee!" she whispered, as she discovered her little daughter peacefully asleep and noticed the gray Quaker bonnet lying beside her. For a moment Mrs. Marsh believed that Sara Gray must be close at hand, but again Bee moved and started up wide awake to find her mother gazing down at her.

For a moment the little girl was too surprised to speak, then she reached out and eagerly clasped her mother's arm, exclaiming, "Mother! Mother! The man took the Hessian's letter. He took it from my pocket and ran. He'll take it to Valley Forge; I know he will!"

"What man?" her mother questioned anxiously, fearful that the important message had been secured by some Tory and again accusing herself of having been careless in regard to its safety. But Bee's quick response reassured her.

"The passenger in the coach, Mother. A man dressed in homespun, who thought I was a Quaker maid because I wore Sara's bonnet. He scowled and muttered about Tories and when the redcoats stopped the coach he picked the letter from my pocket and ran."

"It must have been Peter Vinal!" declared Mrs. Marsh. "The storekeeper at Monmouth Court-House told me that he was the only passenger and that he was on his way to join the American army!"

Bee scrambled out of the coach, forgetting that she was thirsty, hungry and tired, and jumped about clapping her hands in delight.

"Isn't that splendid, Mother! Isn't that

splendid! Oh, are you not glad that I started just when I did and that he believed me a Tory maid! Say that you are glad!" and Bee again seized her mother's arm and laughed aloud, and Mrs. Marsh smiled down at the eager, happy face and said:

"Well, Bee, I must own that it is rare good fortune. It is indeed splendid. Let us sit down and you must tell me all that has happened since we parted last night," and the two seated themselves on the grass beside the coach and Bee told the story of leaving home in the darkness of the early morning, of her walk through the wood-road, of being taken up by the coach, and of all that had so quickly followed.

"And, Mother, I am so thirsty!" she ended plaintively.

"No wonder!" exclaimed her mother; "and 'tis well I brought milk as well as food, for I knew not how long I might journey before I found you. Sit here. I'll bring the basket from the wagon," and Mrs. Marsh hurried away to where Chubby was nibbling at the grass and was soon back with the basket.

"We might as well make a picnic of this great adventure," said Mrs. Marsh, as she opened the

well-filled lunch-basket, drew out the carefully packed bottle of milk and filled a pewter mug for Bee.

There were squares of corn bread, slices of cold chicken, and a number of round, fat molasses cookies; and Bee was sure that it was the best luncheon she had ever eaten; but the fact that her mother had not by word or look expressed disapproval because of Bee's starting off without permission made the little girl thoughtful.

"We will be at home by supper-time," said Mrs. Marsh, as she turned Chubby toward Monmouth Court-House, where she would stop and tell of the abandoned coach.

"Shall we leave Sara's bonnet as we pass the Grays' house?" suggested Mrs. Marsh. "It will only mean a brief stop and very likely she is troubled over its loss."

"I will take it to the house," said Bee; and on reaching the Grays' lane she left the wagon and ran up the lane. There was no one to be seen about the place, and after rapping at both the front and side door without response Bee hung the bonnet by its strings from the latch of the side door and went back to the wagon.

"No one at home," she explained, "but I left

the bonnet at the side door. I hope Mrs. Gray did not punish Sara for losing it," she added, as Chubby started on, eager to reach home.

Mrs. Marsh smiled at Bee as she asked, "Did you not know, my dear, that Quakers do not punish children? It is the children who inflict their own penalties."

Bee looked at her mother in amazement. Who ever heard of such a thing! she thought. "But how could Sara punish herself?" she asked.

"She might, perhaps, ask her mother to suggest some suitable punishment, perhaps giving up some pleasure or sitting alone in her room for the whole of a pleasant afternoon. But Quaker children are taught that every wrong act, every disobedience, brings a punishment; and that if you attend to it yourself promptly and sufficiently you save yourself trouble."

Bee was silent for a little as she thought this over. "I don't like that way, punishing yourself!" she soberly announced. "I had much rather someone would punish me. Wouldn't you, Mother?"

But Mrs. Marsh declared that she would rather choose a punishment and this made Bee again wonder what her mother thought about her start-

ing off on the adventurous errand that might, as Bee now realized, have ended in great misfortune.

But nothing more regarding punishments was said on their way home. Reaching Monmouth Court-House Bee remembered the ten silver shillings in her pocket and the two remaining gooseberry candy balls. "I'll give Mother one as soon as we start," she resolved, as she followed her mother into the store and told the storekeeper of her morning's adventure.

The storekeeper regarded Bee in open-mouthed wonder.

"'Tis a wonderful thing indeed that you are safely on your way home, little maid," he declared. "And I am right glad Peter Vinal escaped."

Neither Bee nor her mother mentioned the Hessian's letter, both realizing that its contents should not become public property.

"Mother, I'd like to spend a sixpence," Bee whispered, as they were about to leave the store. "I'd like to buy something for my prisoner."

"Very well." Mrs. Marsh wondered a little at Bee's wish and also as to what the little girl would purchase. And when Bee asked for a six-

penny's worth of lime drops she nodded approvingly.

"And I have two gooseberry balls, Mother!" Bee announced, drawing the much crumpled paper from her pocket and offering her mother a choice between the two scarlet striped pale green candy balls.

"Why, I think you may give mine to your prisoner, Bee," Mrs. Marsh decided. "The hours must be long for him, lying there useless and suffering and we'll not begrudge him a taste of sweets."

"I'll keep them both for him," declared Bee, "but I am glad he is our prisoner, just the same," she added, for Bee was still resolved that, as soon as Lieutenant Compton could walk, she should be the one to deliver him to General Washington.

CHAPTER IX

SARA'S HAPPY DAY

For several days after Bee's adventure she was unusually quiet, for, as the days passed and Mrs. Marsh did not say a word of censure in regard to her little daughter's having crept from the house that May night to face the perils of unfamiliar roads, Bee began to wonder if her mother had told her of the ways of Quaker discipline in order that Bee might herself decide if she should be punished for not telling her mother of her plan, and perhaps discovering some safer manner of sending to General Washington the Hessian's letter.

"Mother, you said it was splendid that the man in homespun made off with the message!" Bee suddenly exclaimed one morning a week after her adventure when the little girl was helping her mother in the big kitchen.

"Indeed it was, Bee. There is no doubt but what Peter Vinal carried it to Valley Forge," responded Mrs. Marsh.

"And, Mother," Bee eagerly continued, "you have not once said, or even looked, as if you blamed me for starting off without permission. Mother! You would not have let me go and I had to," and Bee's voice sounded as if tears might quickly fall into the yellow bowl where she was beating up the yolks of eggs for a custard.

Mrs. Marsh's face grew sober, and she spoke thoughtfully: "Well, Melissa, you know as well as I can tell you that you ought not to have undertaken so perilous an errand. There was small chance that you could have reached Valley Forge and I should have been in deep trouble about you."

Bee set the yellow bowl on the kitchen table. She didn't want to cry, but it was hard work to keep back the tears. She couldn't keep on beating eggs when at any moment the tears might come.

"Mother! Don't you think I helped any?" faltered Bee, and Mrs. Marsh at once replied:

"I am sure you helped a great deal and that is why, dear child, that I could not say a word about it. How could I? But you know, Bee, that I am quite sure I ought to;" and now Bee was

leaning against her mother's knees and they were both smiling at each other in perfect understanding; for Mrs. Marsh realized that Bee had, in her eagerness to help the army in which her father was a soldier, forgotten not only her own peril but her mother's anxiety and trouble had she not returned home.

"I think Sara's bonnet has had a good deal to do with all this good luck about the Hessian's letter," continued Mrs. Marsh.

"Oh, yes, indeed! The man would not have given it to me had I not worn Sara's bonnet nor would the man in the coach have believed me a Tory maid with a message," declared Bee; "but I cannot tell Sara a word about it," she added a little regretfully and Mrs. Marsh agreed that it was best not to talk about it.

Although Mrs. Marsh had not asked any promises from Bee, she now felt a new comfort and security, for she was sure her little daughter had realized her mother's deep anxiety on finding that Bee was off on so dangerous an errand, and would henceforth do her best not to add any worry to the days that were days of strain and trouble for all residents of New Jersey.

Bee went back to the kitchen table, picked up

the bowl and the long-handled spoon and finished her task of beating the yolks and sugar into a creamy mixture; then she added the milk, grated in the nutmeg and stirred them all smoothly together.

"'Twill be a fine custard," her mother declared as she tested the oven to make sure the heat was right.

"Ring says there are strawberries as big as walnuts in our strawberry bed and ripe enough to pick. You can gather a good bowl full and we'll have them with our dinner," said Mrs. Marsh and Bee took a basket from a low shelf in the pantry, and leaving the kitchen went across the yard to the sunny slope where the big strawberry-bed flourished, and had hardly covered the bottom of the round basket when she heard Sara's familiar voice and looked up to see the little Quaker maid leaning over the wall. At the sight of her Bee sprang up, dropping her basket and exclaimed almost in horror:

"Sara! Sara Gray! What have you got on your head?"

"'Tis thy fault, Melissa Marsh, that I wear this black bonnet, for, though I did not tell my mother, 'twas *thee* who led me into sinful ways,"

declared Sara, peering out from the deeps of a huge black bonnet.

"Oh, Sara Gray! You said you hated being a Quaker maid; hated your dress and your bonnet! And now you blame me because you played like other children and had a good time! For it was fun to wade, was it not, Sara?" and Bee now faced Sara across the wall.

"I blame thee; indeed I do so; thou left me to hunt my lost shoe alone till a kind soldier came and found it for me. And I went home bonnetless, Melissa Marsh, and now must wear my grandmother's bonnet as a penalty for *thy* reckless actions," and Sara ended in a little sniffle over her misfortunes and turned her head away so that all Bee could see of her visitor was the side of the ugly, scoop-like, black Quaker bonnet.

"Did your mother say you must wear that dreadful bonnet, Sara?" asked Bee, but before Sara could reply she added: "Truly, I am sorry not to have helped you find the shoe."

But Sara only sniffled more loudly. The week that had passed since the adventurous day with Bee in the pine woods had not been a pleasant time for the little Quaker girl. Mistress Gray had treated her daughter with silent disapproval,

even though Sara had been promptly ready to win forgiveness by selecting the most disagreeable punishment for her faults that she could possibly imagine. It was Sara herself who, after declaring the loss of her own bonnet, had climbed to a dark attic and brought down the huge black bonnet which she wore whenever she went out-of-doors, although her own bonnet was found the day after hanging on the latch of the side door. Beside this Sara carefully, at each meal, refused to be helped to gingerbread or to use sugar on her porridge, casting the while many appealing glances toward her mother. But Mistress Gray was sure that only stern discipline would serve to make her children realize the sin of disobedience and had not as yet sufficiently relented to bid her little daughter put off the black bonnet and once more taste the excellent gingerbread that Susanna was so ready to eat.

Bee, gazing at the forlorn little figure leaning against the wall, began to feel very sorry for her friend, chiefly because Sara's mother was not like her own.

"Climb over the wall, Sara. Please do. I'm picking our garden strawberries. They are as big as walnuts and as sweet as honey and you

may eat as many as you please," she urged, and Sara, after a little more persuasion, scrambled over the low wall and followed Bee to the strawberry bed.

"May you not take off that big, hot bonnet now, Sara? Surely you do not have to wear it forever?" Bee suggested, a little fearful lest Sara might again promptly reprove her for sinful recklessness. But Sara pulled it off eagerly, throwing it toward the wall as if only too ready to be rid of it.

"'Tis a hateful bonnet. I despise it!" she declared and Bee, gazing admiringly at the curling mass of Sara's short hair, exclaimed:

"Oh, Sara! Your hair is so pretty it ought never to be covered. It's like gold, only lovelier."

"Beauty is but a vain thing," the little Quakeress answered primly; but there was a little smile hovering near her mouth and she was thinking to herself that Bee was the nicest girl she knew.

"But why do you think that, Sara? Are not lilac blossoms lovely and the wild arbutus that grows at the edge of the pine woods and the birds, too? Why, even the wild partridges are pretty.

And do we not like pretty things best? Of course we do! Why, I like my blue flounced muslin a million times better than this old brown gingham," Bee urged, as she began to fill her basket with the ripe berries.

"Maybe," Sara reluctantly admitted, and then, in a very different tone, she turned toward Bee and exclaimed: "I wish that once, just once, I could wear a pretty dress and a flowery hat and look as thou dost on the Sabbath day, Bee!"

"Truly, Sara? Well, you shall! You shall wear my best dress, and my new leghorn hat and my bronze slippers," Bee declared, smiling with satisfaction at the thought that she could make some return for what Sara's bonnet had helped her to accomplish.

But Sara, carefully selecting the ripest berry in sight to put in her mouth, shook her head dolefully.

"Yes, Sara! Of course you can. I have berries enough now; we'll go to my chamber and you can dress up in my things. Come on!" urged Bee. "Mother is in the lower field after wild strawberries but she would not mind. Come on," and Bee held out her hand to help Sara to her feet and a moment later the little girls were

running toward the house, Sara's pale face flushing with delight at the thought of seeing herself in a dress such as she had seen other girls wear.

Bee left the basket of strawberries on the kitchen table, and hurried Sara through the hallway and up the stairs to her own room, closing the door softly behind them.

"Dilly is in the prisoner's room, shaking up pillows and telling him about the chickens. Isn't it funny, Sara, Dilly likes him," said Bee, quite forgetting their former disagreement regarding the English soldier. But Sara did not seem to hear what her companion had said. She was looking about the little room with admiring eyes.

"Oh, Bee! There are little wreaths of pink flowers all over the walls and thou hast a fine blue pitcher and basin and a soft rug beside thy bed!" she exclaimed, for Sara and Susanna slept in a bare chamber with nothing to make it attractive and Bee's simple chamber seemed a lovely place in contrast to her own.

"And dolls!" continued the little Quakeress running to the corner where stood the two tiny yellow rocking-chairs. Kneeling down in front

of Emmeline and Rosalind she smoothed their silken skirts with a tender carefulness.

" Sara, just come and choose the dress you like best," called Bee, who had opened the closet door and was trying to decide which was the prettier, the blue flounced muslin or the white dimity dress with its pink rosebuds.

Sara was at the closet door almost before Bee had finished speaking and needed but a moment to choose the pretty dimity gown.

" Take off all your things," commanded Bee, pulling open a bureau drawer and taking out her finest underwear, and her most treasured white stockings. In a short time the delighted Sara was clothed from head to foot in the very best of Bee's well-cared-for garments. The two girls were so nearly of a size that the dimity dress, the stockings and the pretty bronze ankle-ties with their shining square buckles fitted her as well as they did Bee and when, from a big flowered bandbox that Bee brought from the closet, she lifted a hat of white leghorn trimmed with pale pink ribbons and a wreath of white rosebuds and placed it on Sara's head, the little Quakeress was changed into one of the prettiest girls Bee had ever seen.

"There's a long mirror in the parlor where you can see yourself. Oh, Sara! you do look lovely!" exclaimed Bee, and clasping Sara's arm was about to start for down-stairs, when Sara drew back and said in a half whisper:

"Bee! would thee, oh, would thee let me carry the little blue silk parasol that thou dost sometimes carry on sunny Sabbaths?"

"I forgot it! Of course you can carry it," Bee instantly agreed, and was off to the closet after the cherished parasol. As she smilingly handed it to Sara the little Quakeress gave her a look of such delight and gratitude that Bee always remembered it.

The long mirror gave to Sara's eyes a picture of a smiling, happy girl in a becoming dress and pretty hat and she smiled back at the picture, curtseying at her mirrored self as she had seen Bee and other village girls do to their elders; and Bee laughed in delight.

"Let's play you are a visitor, Sara," she said. "I've thought of a splendid plan! Let us make a visit to the English soldier. Dilly is back in the kitchen before this time."

Sara promptly agreed. "Thee knows I meant to see him before this, Melissa," she re-

minded her friend and the two little girls crossed the hallway, went through the sitting-room and rapped on the door of Lieutenant Compton's chamber.

CHAPTER X

UNEXPECTED VISITORS

"COME in," he called, quite ready to welcome any visitor for, although Mrs. Marsh had supplied him with comfortable clothing and Dilly gave him excellent care, the young English soldier found the days long. When the door opened and he saw Sara in all her unaccustomed finery smiling happily as she came toward him, he exclaimed:

"What is this? A good fairy come to visit me?"

"If thou please, I am Sara Gray," said the little Quakeress.

"You are most welcome, Sara. I love every Quaker in New Jersey, save that base rebel Timothy Mallack," he responded, and as his glance rested on Bee he continued, "And here is a brown Honeybee! But how does it happen that a little Quaker maid is so gaily dressed? Have you, perchance, changed gowns?"

Bee had drawn a chair near the bed. Before replying to her "prisoner," she motioned Sara

to sit down, and the little Quakeress promptly obeyed. Then Bee, in what she believed to be a very "grown-up" manner, asked: "Are you gaining in strength, Lieutenant Compton?"

"Thank you, Mistress Honeybee. I rejoice to inform you that, thanks to the best of care, good food and a gift of lime drops, I am gaining in strength and hope soon to rejoin my regiment in Philadelphia," responded the young soldier; who, well-bolstered up with pillows, now managed a very polite bow toward his young visitors.

"But you are a prisoner! You will *not* go back to the English Army!" Bee declared. "Just as soon as you can walk you are to go to General Washington!"

"What's that? What are you saying? Is not this a Tory household?" exclaimed the young man, drawing himself up on his pillows and looking from Bee to Sara as if expecting one of the little girls to promptly assure him that Bee was but joking. But her prompt reply, "Indeed 'tis not a Tory household. You are my prisoner," made Sara exclaim:

"Melissa, thou must remember that 'twas I who saw him first; and thou knowest he is to go to his friends as soon as he is able."

" That's the way to talk, little Quaker maid," said the soldier sinking back on his pillows and disposed to believe that Bee was playing a game to make him believe himself a prisoner. But the little girl's next words made him troubled and alarmed.

" I wonder you did not know that we are loyal Americans," said Bee, steadily meeting his questioning glance. " You need not mind what Sara says; she can't help being a Quaker."

For a moment the young man did not speak. His eyes closed and his face was so white and thin that Bee began to wish that she had not told him he was really a prisoner. She knew that the village doctor said the Englishman was bearing pain like a soldier and suddenly Bee felt a little ashamed. Perhaps he could not help being an English soldier any more than Sara could help being a little Quaker maid.

" You are to have ripe strawberries for your dinner. I picked them. And there is plenty of thick cream to eat with them," she said quickly.

The young man opened his eyes, and a little smile lingered about his lips as he said:

" Why, thank you, Miss Hornet—I mean

Honeybee. And will you not sit down? What is happening in this part of the world?"

"Well," said Bee, sitting down near Sara, "English soldiers stopped a coach on the Monmouth road last week, and took the horses and coachman. But an American soldier, who was a passenger, escaped."

The soldier's smile widened and Sara now offered her bit of news.

"And there was a big English soldier in a tin hat searching for thee, last week. And I told him thou wert with friends," she said eagerly, although Bee was frowning her disapproval.

"Why, I begin to feel that I shall soon be off!" declared the young man. "I would I could have such visitors every day. Dilly has promised to bring me a Maltese kitten to keep me company."

"You may have both the kittens," said Bee. "I guess you'd have to have them both anyway, for Dot follows wherever Spot goes," and Bee smiled as she recalled how the two fat Maltese kittens bounced about in pursuit of each other.

"I'll bring them now if you wish," she suggested, and the young man said he would be well pleased to see Dot and Spot.

"I'll be right back, Sara," said Bee, and started toward the porch where the kittens liked to play or to rest curled up in the sunshine like balls of gray fur.

But as Bee reached the doorway she stopped suddenly and gave a little exclamation of dismay for her glance rested on a tall figure in a gray dress and Quaker bonnet coming directly toward the house, and beside her walked Susanna.

"'Tis Mistress Gray!" she whispered. "Whatever will I do? She mustn't see Sara! She mustn't!"

Bee's first impulse was to run back and warn Sara of her mother's approach, but there was not time. Mistress Gray's sharp eyes had discovered Bee and in another moment the little girl heard her say:

"There, Susanna! Thou art wrong again. Thy sister is not with Melissa Marsh," and Susanna's quick response, "Sara may be hiding," made Bee scowl at the younger girl, and wonder why it was that Susanna always said and did disagreeable things.

She promptly exclaimed, "Sara is not hid-

ing, Susanna," and then curtseyed to Mistress Gray, who shook her head disapprovingly.

"Thou needst not bend thy knees for me, Melissa," she said, "and I see that Sara is not with thee. She wanders about too much, I fear."

"Will you not sit down and rest, Mis—Elizabeth?" asked Bee, eagerly pulling forward a wooden rocking-chair; and Mistress Gray, with a nod of acknowledgment, sat down while Susanna seated herself primly on the upper step.

"'Tis a long walk, and I am glad to rest," said Mrs. Gray. "I came not wholly to ask for my wandering child," she continued, fixing her glance on Bee. "I have intended to visit the young English soldier, to whom this house offered shelter; and now seems a fitting time, if thy mother approves."

"Mother is in the lower field gathering wild strawberries. Our garden strawberries are ripe. Would you not like to taste them?" Bee answered, a little anxiously, hoping to keep her visitors on the porch as long as possible. But Mistress Gray declared that to eat betwixt meals was most unseemly and Susanna's hopeful look vanished.

"I will venture to see the English soldier now!" Mistress Gray announced a few moments later, rising from the chair and turning toward Bee, evidently expecting that the little girl would at once lead her to the patient's room. "Thy mother would surely wish me to do so," she added, evidently surprised that Bee had not promptly agreed with her suggestion.

For a moment Bee did not know what to do and looked from Susanna to Mistress Gray as if hoping one of them would come to her aid. To lead Sara's mother to the very room where the little Quaker maid, dressed "like other girls," was so happily enjoying herself seemed beyond Bee's powers.

"Whatever would Mistress Gray do!" thought Bee, realizing that such a sight might well make Sara's mother suggest a more severe and terrible punishment than Sara had yet known.

But while Bee hesitated her visitor, closely followed by Susanna, was moving toward the door and instantly Bee darted ahead of them. "Maybe Sara can hide if I tell her before her mother suspects," she thought, as she ran across the sitting-room and, forgetting the rule never to

enter anyone's room without rapping, pushed open the door.

Bee gazed about quickly with a little gasp of surprise, for Sara was not to be seen! Bee's blue silk parasol lay upon the floor, but there was nothing else to show that the English soldier had had a visitor. Mistress Gray and Susanna were so close behind Bee that she had no time to speak, nor did she even remember that she should announce these new visitors. All she could think of was Sara and hope that she was securely hidden; and it was Susanna who picked up the parasol from the floor, holding it as if it were some unexpected treasure, and touching the silk with her finger tips.

But Bee was too anxious to notice Susanna and not until her searching glance met that of the young soldier did she lose the fear that Sara was sure to be discovered. But Bee's prisoner's look seemed to assure her that all was well. He nodded reassuringly and as he politely welcomed the new visitors Bee left the room.

"If Sara only got away and isn't hiding where her mother may find her," thought Bee, looking about the sitting-room. "Maybe she went up the back stairs and is in my room now." At this

possibility Bee darted up the stairs and was about to open the door of her room when she discovered that it was fastened.

Sara must be in there; but to call out might bring Dilly or even Mistress Gray herself, so Bee moved the latch gently and tapped softly on the door, whispering:

"It's Bee! Open the door!"

And very cautiously Sara opened the door, and Bee stepped in.

The two little girls stood for a moment looking at each other. Sara had been crying and was evidently badly frightened.

"What will I do, Bee?" she whispered.

"Take off my things as quickly as you can, Sara, and put on your own and start home. Perhaps you can get there before your mother leaves here," said Bee, beginning to help Sara with the fastenings of the white dimity gown.

Neither of the girls spoke again until Sara was once more dressed in the gray homespun and the stout leather shoes. Then noticing Sara's unhappy expression Bee tried to comfort her.

"You can go up by the strawberry-bed and get that bonnet, Sara, and I'm sure you can get home before your mother does. She need never know

that you dressed up in my clothes, for there was no harm in it, Sara. 'Twas but a game," she said, putting her arm about Sara.

But Sara shook her head. " I do not want her to know but I must tell her. I know I must," she said and before Bee could speak Sara gave a little jump and pointed toward the door which opened slowly and revealed Susanna, holding the opened parasol over her head, while Dot and Spot jumped about her feet as if they had found a long desired playmate.

CHAPTER XI

MISTRESS GRAY RELENTS

With a little mincing step Susanna came into the chamber, bowing to Bee and then to Sara and saying, "I am glad to find thee at home, Mistress Melissa! And I see thou hast company!" Susanna gazed at Sara as if she had never seen her before and Bee instantly entered into Susanna's game of pretending that she was a visitor. After a moment of suspicious doubt of Susanna's intentions, Sara joined in happily. The two dolls, Emmeline and Rosalind, with their little yellow rocking-chairs were brought from the corner and, with Sara and Susanna on the window-seat and Bee in her own little rocking-chair, the three girls entirely forgot everything excepting their pleasure in being together, until Dilly came to the door, and smiled upon them, saying:

"Wal, h'ar yo' is, Miss M'lissa; an' I've jes' took a batch o' 'lasses cake out'n de oven an' yo' bring dese lille gals down to de kitchen an' I'll give yo' all a bit of it." Nodding and smiling, she disappeared before Bee could reply. They

all jumped up and started after her; and not until they were on the stairs did Sara remember that she did not want to be discovered by her mother.

But she quickly decided it was too late to turn back and clasped Bee's hand as if for protection as they entered the kitchen where Dilly was spreading a white cloth on one end of the kitchen table.

"I reckon a bite of 'lasses cake won' spile yo' apperites fer dinner," she said as she filled three shining pewter mugs with creamy milk and set a plate of hot gingerbread on the table, bidding the little girls to help themselves. They needed no second invitation and as Sara's white teeth sank into a soft square of warm gingerbread she quite forgot her self-inflicted punishments and she and Susanna exchanged a glance of delight at this day of unexpected pleasure; nor did one of the girls even suspect that from the open doorway Mistress Gray's glance was resting upon them nor did she look with disapproval. In fact her own face had softened into a smile as she moved quietly away and seated herself on the front porch; and a little later Dilly announced:

"Yo' ma say dat yo' are both to come to de

porch, Missy Sara an' Susanna. She be gwine home."

"Bee!" Sara exclaimed, and then without a word started with Susanna toward the porch, with Bee close behind them.

"I will not wait to see thy mother, Melissa," said Mistress Gray, at the same time reaching a hand toward each of her little daughters, "as 'tis time for us to be on our homeward way," and, with the surprised Sara and Susanna holding tight to their mother's hand, she bade Bee goodbye and went down the porch steps.

Bee looked after them wonderingly, for Mistress Gray had smiled upon her and had seemed well pleased to find the bareheaded Sara. Bee picked up the kittens who had just had their share of milk in the kitchen and were now jumping about the porch, and turned thoughtfully toward the prisoner's room, thinking that, after all, Mistress Gray was something like her own mother.

"Even if Sara tells her about dressing up I don't believe Sara will need to punish herself," she thought hopefully, as she asked if she might enter the lieutenant's room.

"Do you not attend school, Honeybee?" he

asked, after Bee had told him of Sara's happy departure for home hand in hand with her mother.

" School is closed and it may not open before autumn," said Bee, putting Dot and Spot down where the prisoner could admire them. " My mother says it may well be that school will not open until the war ends, and the English leave the country."

A little frown gathered on the young man's forehead. " But I'll wager your father, or of a surety your grandfather, was English born and loyal to his King! Why do you so hate King George? " he asked. " It is not long since from the Gulf of Mexico to the icy shores of Hudson's Bay, from the Atlantic Ocean to that far river called the Mississippi, there was no man of English blood who was not loyal; and now they all seem to be mad against us, claiming the King may not do as he pleases."

" My father says that King George the Third is a selfish and a wicked man," Bee responded eagerly, " and that he and his parliament have no right to take America's money from her in taxes. And that they have no right to send armies here to force Americans to give up their freedom."

A smile crept over the young man's face.

"Well! well! I fear the war is lost now," he said. "What chance has an English army, when even little maids like you know the cause for which Americans fight!" and he shook his head so solemnly that Bee felt sure he was making sport of her and was about to run away when he said:

"But I keep up my courage, Honeybee, by repeating to myself a poem written of battles that England has won," and, as if forgetting that he was speaking aloud, he repeated:

"'And taking many a fort,
Furnished in warlike sort,
March'd toward Agincourt
In happy hour;
Skirmishing day by day
With those who stop'd his way,
Where the French general lay
In all his power.

"'Poictiers and Cressy tell,
When most their pride did swell,
Under our swords they fell,
No less our skill is
Than when our grandsire great,
Claiming the regal seat,
By many a warlike feat,
Lop'd the French lilies.'"

Bee had listened intently to the musical words. "Did you make that up?" she asked admiringly.

"Why, that was written nearly two hundred years ago, Honeybee," replied the young man. "'Tis from 'The Battle of Agincourt,' by Michael Drayton."

"I like it," Bee soberly announced; "are there more verses?"

The soldier nodded: "A dozen more; here is the last one:

> "'Upon St. Crispin's day
> Fought was this noble fray,
> Which fame did not delay,
> To England to carry.
> O when shall Englishmen
> With such acts fill a pen,
> Or England breed again
> Such a King Harry.'"

There was a little silence in the pleasant chamber and then Bee said:

"I know a poet who writes about America's triumphs. If there should be a battle at Monmouth I expect Philip Freneau would write about it."

"And do you think there will be a battle at Monmouth?" questioned the young soldier.

Before Bee could reply Dilly's voice calling, "Miss M'lissa! Miss M'lissa-a," made Bee jump up from her chair and start toward the door.

"But she is calling someone named 'Melissa'!" said Lieutenant Compton.

"That's my truly name," Bee called back, as she left the room. But after that Bee made many a visit to the prisoner's room and he would often repeat poems that the little girl loved to listen to and some of which she always remembered.

The old black bonnet that Sara had thrown against the wall lay there unnoticed for several days, then Bee picked it up and carried it to her room and hung it in a corner of her closet. "Sara can take it home when she comes again," thought Bee; but days passed and Sara did not appear; and as these were busy days for Bee she did not think very often of the little Quaker maids.

Strawberries were now at their best, and every morning Bee was in the meadows gathering the berries which her mother and Dilly made into delicious preserve or jam; and all through the house was the fragrance of the boiling syrup

mingled with that of the berries. Besides gathering the strawberries, Bee helped prepare them for the kettle, carefully removing the green "hulls" that held each berry to the stem. She knew just how much sugar should be used for every pint of berries and that each of the glass tumblers and jars must stand in warm water before being filled with the scalding jam. In fact, the little girl was quite sure that she could have attended to the entire process of making the preserves without any assistance from either Dilly or her mother.

On the very day when the preserves were finished and carefully put on the top shelf of the cellarway closet, Mrs. Marsh told Bee that the doctor had made his last visit to Lieutenant Compton who now was sitting up the greater part of each day with the lame leg carefully resting on a cushioned box that Ring and Dilly had fixed for him.

"Ring has gone to Monmouth to-day to borrow a pair of crutches so that your prisoner may at least try to hobble about," said Mrs. Marsh, and Bee listened eagerly.

"Then 'twill not be long before he can walk, not very long, Mother?" she questioned.

"I hope very soon he will be well enough for us to send word to General Dickinson to come and take charge of him. I like not to have an English soldier here," her mother replied; for the news that the British were now ready to leave Philadelphia and march to New York was known throughout New Jersey; and remembering that the Hessian's note declared the army would march by the road leading past Monmouth Court-House made Mrs. Marsh dread lest Bee's prisoner should gather news of the resources of the neighborhood for the benefit of the English; and she felt that the sooner he was in the custody of loyal American soldiers the better.

But as Bee listened she thought of her father in the far-off camp and saw herself taking her prisoner there.

"And then I know they would let my father come home," decided the little girl, and reminded her mother that Lieutenant Compton was her prisoner.

"Mother, I won't run off again," Bee promised earnestly, "but I do think I might be the one to make him a real prisoner," she urged, and her mother looked at the little girl with serious eyes and said:

"Well, dear child, I think so too. But we will have to think about this, and decide what is right for us to do," and Bee started off to make sure that the English soldier was safe in the big chair near his chamber window.

"I mean to be sure that some Tory does not help him escape," she thought, remembering how nearly the Hessian had come to finding him.

CHAPTER XII

"PRINCE"

THE June days grew very warm; that month of the year 1778 was long remembered as one of unseasonable heat. Almost every day Bee went to the pine woods and down the slope to the wide brook where she waded in the cool water; or making tiny boats of oak leaves she would play that they were the wonderful fleet of French gunboats, twelve ships and six frigates, under the command of Count d'Estaing, that were reported as having sailed to aid America in her effort to establish herself as an independent nation. Bee was well used to finding amusement for herself, as the Marsh farm had no neighbors nearer than the Grays and days often passed without the little girl seeing anyone of her own age. She had no thought of being lonely—but made friends with a family of robins that nested in the lilac bushes. Sir Robin and Lady Robin and their three children would fly to meet her, sure that she had bits of sweet cookies or tiny crumbs of frosting for them.

Besides the robin family, Bee had persuaded two gray squirrels that she was a person to be trusted. These squirrels lived in the pine woods and whenever Bee appeared near a group of three large trees that grew close together, very near the brook, " General Anthony Wayne " and " Governor William Livingston," as Bee had named them, would come and chitter inquiringly from the protection of a bough not far above the little girl's head. When they had made quite sure that this was surely the same little maid who talked to them in so pleasant a voice and who brought them walnuts and raisins they would come down the trunk of the tree and, standing on their hind legs, would watch her eagerly, their bright eyes shining with expectation.

" Governor William Livingston " was the larger of the two gray squirrels and Bee holding out a tempting walnut in one hand would gently remind him that anyone bearing so important a name must not be ill-mannered. She delighted in watching the alert, graceful little creatures as they scurried away to conceal the nuts, or sat up to eat them.

A few days after the doctor had made his final visit to the English prisoner, Bee was at her fa-

vorite spot near the group of pines. She had fed the squirrels and they had raced off to conceal their booty; she had waded in the brook and guided the French fleet of oak-leaf boats safely into harbor at Sandy Hook, and now, resting her head against one of the tall pines, Bee's thoughts sped to her soldier father and she wondered how soon he would once more be at home.

Only that morning a man from Monmouth on his way to Morristown had ridden up the Marsh lane to ask for a cool drink and Bee's mother had asked if there was any news regarding the movements of the British army in Philadelphia. Bee had heard the man reply that it was a " retreat " the English were making. He said that nearly two hundred transport vessels of the English now lay in the Delaware, protected by British troops that lined the Jersey shore.

" Those boats are loaded with plunder from Philadelphia, as well as belongings of Tories who dare no longer stay in Philadelphia," he declared and had added that with generals such as Wayne, Scott, Morgan and Maxwell, and a commander like Washington, the American army was sure to win their rightful cause.

It was then that Bee had asked if the English

army would march along the road that led to Morristown; and the man had answered that as yet no one could say and at this Mrs. Marsh had shaken her head warningly, by which Bee understood that she was not to speak of the Hessian's note, for in those perilous days news traveled fast and spies often were discovered where least expected.

"It may be that General Washington and my father will come and drive the English back," thought Bee remembering the speed with which Peter Vinal had made off with the Hessian's letter and confident that it had safely reached General Washington.

A movement from among some low growing shrubs near the brook made the little girl turn her glance in that direction. Instantly all her thoughts of English prisoners, marching armies and possible battles vanished, for creeping out from under the bushes came a little creature with a pointed nose, upstanding ears, and a rough reddish fur.

"It's a fox!" thought Bee, holding her breath and not moving lest the newcomer should be off before she could discover if it really were a fox. For, as it stepped cautiously out from its hiding

place, Bee became more and more sure that it was not.

"It has a collar around its neck. It's a dog! A lost dog!" Bee whispered and at that moment the dog's sharp eyes discovered that he was not alone in the pine woods. With a friendly little bark, his stubby tail wagging his confidence that he had found a friend, the dog came running toward her.

Bee welcomed him warily. She was not the least afraid of this agreeable newcomer but she knew instinctively that it was best not to touch him until he had convinced himself that he was secure in her company; so she spoke to him gently, offered him a bit of gingerbread that she had intended for "General Wayne" and then ventured to pat his rough head. At last she examined his collar, on which was a silver plate on which was engraved: "Prince." Directly beneath it were three letters "R. G. C."

"I suppose those are your master's initials, Prince," said Bee, and at the sound of his own name the dog leaped about her in delight as if eager to tell her that it had been a long time since a friendly voice had called him by his own name.

And now Bee noticed that Prince was very thin and she discovered that he limped a little.

"You have come a long way, haven't you, Prince?" she questioned and she was eager to start for home and take her new friend with her. "I guess my mother will be surprised when she sees what I've found," the little girl thought as she left the pine woods and with Prince limping behind her made her way across the pasture.

Once or twice Prince stopped to rest, whining a little to attract Bee's attention, and the little girl would turn back to pat his head encouragingly when he would once more do his best to keep up with her. She realized the little creature was nearly exhausted and at last as they reached the wall by the lane, Bee picked Prince up, set him on the wall, then started along the lane carrying him in her arms.

The dog gave a little tired sigh. "Just like a person," thought Bee and for a few moments he was perfectly still; but as they entered the yard, Prince's ears pricked inquiringly, he lifted his head quickly, and before Bee could tighten her hold on him, he had leaped from her arms and, apparently no longer tired and not minding his bruised paw, he dashed across the yard, up the

porch steps and vanished into the house. Almost instantly a yell of terror from Dilly made Bee quicken her pace to a run.

"Whatever made him go off like that?" thought the puzzled girl, "and how silly for Dilly to be afraid of him," for Dilly's yells were growing in force and number. When Bee appeared in the open doorway she came to a sudden standstill with a quick fear that she had brought home a dangerous beast, for Dilly lay sprawled on the floor, while an overturned bucket of soap-suds spread its contents about her, and at every effort she made to rise, Prince would spring toward her with threatening growls.

"Ooh! my lan'! What'll I do? Don' come nigh, Missy," moaned Dilly, rolling her eyes in the direction of Prince, who now darted into the sitting-room and was heard barking in front of the door of the prisoner's chamber.

"Whar'd dat imp o' Satan cum from?" muttered Dilly, scrambling to her feet and seizing the overturned bucket. "He rush in dat door lak he wa' a devourin' lion, Missy, an' w'en I jumps I slips an' falls an' den he wouldn' le' me git up! Hark to him! Lan'! He's Satan hisself."

For Prince's barks had grown louder and he was jumping against the closed door as if determined to go through it.

"Don' yo' go nigh him!" shrieked Dilly as Bee entered the sitting-room; and Bee stopped quickly. But it was not Dilly's voice that had brought her to a standstill, for the door into Lieutenant Compton's chamber swung open and the lieutenant, resting on his crutches, was nearly knocked over by Prince's sudden spring upon him. And at this, forgetting Dilly's warning, Bee ran forward calling: "Prince! Prince!" hoping this wild dog that she had brought home would not fatally injure her prisoner.

An instant later the young man nodded and smiled at her, and said, "It's my dog! It's Prince! However he found me I can't imagine! Good fellow!" and he smiled down at the dog who was now lying at his feet with alert eyes fixed upon the master who had been so long lost and was now so happily found.

"Your dog!" Bee fairly gasped that so wonderful a thing as this could really have happened. "I found him in the pine woods and he was so tired he could hardly walk and now look at him!"

Bee ended, a little accusing note in her voice, for Prince was again leaping about his master as if to make sure that this was not a happy dream from which he would awaken.

Bee's prisoner sank down on the wide cushioned settle and Prince promptly sprang up beside him. For a moment the little girl stood watching them. " I guess the Englishman is as glad to be found as Prince is to find him," she thought, and then she was surprised to see the young man unfasten the broad collar on the dog's neck. The collar apparently opened like a purse, and Bee's startled glance saw the young man draw out a folded paper that he read eagerly, his face brightening with each word; as he finished he looked up and smiled at Bee, saying:

" Well, Honeybee, you have done me a great service. You cannot know how great. You have brought me my best friend," he stroked Prince's rough head, " and, better than that, news that I was eager to hear."

Bee did not answer. She was wishing that someone else had found the weary little dog.

" Who knows what may be in that letter? " she thought; it might say that General Clinton and

his Hessians were already on the march to New York; it might perhaps ask this English soldier to send news by Prince, concealed in that shabby leather collar, and Bee stood staring at the young lieutenant more resolved than ever that he must soon be given into the custody of Washington.

Lieutenant Compton did not at once refasten the collar on Prince's neck; it lay beside him on the settle and he put down the slip of paper beside it as he turned to examine the injured paw to which Prince, with various whimpers, now called his attention.

"Honeybee, help me out, will you? This poor little paw needs attention. It needs a lotion and a bandage. Just see how thin the little chap is," and the young man looked at Bee as if confident that she would help him.

Bee came slowly across the room. There lay the paper. By reaching out her hand she could take it and the prisoner could not recover it unless she pleased to give it to him.

"He's a prisoner and our enemy," she told herself. "I ought to take it." Nevertheless the little girl hesitated. To snatch that paper and run seemed impossible. With a little sigh, Bee

turned back, saying, "I'll fetch some things," and went slowly toward the kitchen, followed by Dilly, who had lingered at the sitting-room door fearful lest the "imp o' Satan," as she persisted in calling the faithful dog, should suddenly attack her young mistress and determined, in spite of her own fears, to rush to Bee's protection if need be.

"I guess I'm almost a Tory," Bee thought dismally, as she watched the young Englishman carefully bandage the injured paw and noticed that letter and collar were still resting on the settle. But Bee made no move to take the letter. She told herself that even if he was a prisoner he was their guest; to snatch the letter was something that could not be done; at least, it could not be done by a little girl like Melissa Marsh who had been carefully taught the real meaning of good manners.

"I'll tell Mother about it, anyway," Bee decided, as Dilly entered the room to take away the basin, lotion and strips of bandages left from attending to Prince's injured paw.

Dilly approached cautiously but Prince did not notice her as his master was adjusting his crutches and starting to hobble back to his own

room; so Dilly gathered up everything in sight, not only the strips of old cotton but the dog-collar and the folded paper and started briskly off to the kitchen.

CHAPTER XIII

A NEW PLAYHOUSE

Bee was about to run after Dilly when the young Englishman called: "Honeybee! I left a letter and Prince's collar on the settle. Will you please bring them to me?"

"They are not on the settle!" Bee declared a moment later, standing in the doorway between the two rooms and nearly as surprised as was the lieutenant. But the little girl could see that the young man was startled by this disappearance of the note and also that he meant to recover it, for he was reaching for his crutches and swinging himself toward the settle.

"Who took them?" he questioned in so loud a tone that Dilly, who had discovered that she had carried off something with a bit of silver on it and was now returning it, gave a startled exclamation, and the young man turned to see her coming toward him with the dog collar in her hand.

"I reckon dis b'long ter de dorg," she said.

"Where is the letter? The letter?" questioned Lieutenant Compton anxiously, almost fiercely.

But Dilly shook her head.

"I ain' seen no lettah! No, sah! Dar was a scrap o' paper, an' I burn it up!" she said calmly, and at the lieutenant's smile Dilly smiled in response, quite sure that she was being praised for her good conduct.

"Thank heaven!" he whispered and without another word made his way back to his room while Bee, troubled and a little alarmed at the thought of what that letter might have contained, followed her.

"Dilly, I want some milk for Prince!" she announced and as Dilly started off to the cellar, where on a broad swinging shelf were set shining tin pans filled with milk, Bee's glance turned toward the deep fireplace where, over a bed of coals, a kettle was boiling.

"Goodness!" Bee whispered darting forward; for on the hearthstone fluttered a slip of paper. "Dilly didn't throw it on the fire. It's the letter that Prince brought," she whispered, thrusting the note into her pocket and, without waiting for Dilly's return, ran from the kitchen, glad to

escape into the cool air and eager to tell her mother all that had happened.

Mrs. Marsh was at work in the vegetable garden just beyond the strawberry bed and as Bee came running up the slope she started to meet her and Bee could hardly wait to begin her story.

" Come into the shade of the oak tree, Bee," said her mother. They seated themselves in the pleasant shadow of the wide spreading branches of the big oak near the wall and Bee quickly told her story of the appearance of Prince, and of securing the message the dog had brought to his master.

" Dilly is sure that she threw it in the fire and my prisoner thinks it is burned up," said Bee, as she drew the paper from her pocket and handed it to her mother.

Mrs. Marsh read it slowly. Bee could see that her mother was troubled and alarmed by its contents. " What is it, Mother? What does it say? " she asked.

" 'Tis so queerly written I am doubtful as to its meaning. But one thing is sure: that on June the 18th the King's troops leave Philadelphia. 'Tis to be hoped that Washington knows the

route they mean to follow," she said thoughtfully and added, as though speaking to herself, "I wish the young English soldier were not here!"

"Mother, he walks. Anyway, he moves about with the crutches. Could he not get into the low cart and be driven to Washington's camp?" Bee asked, but Mrs. Marsh shook her head.

"Talk no more of that, Bee. 'Tis out of the question. But we must see to it that he finds no way of sending any message to General Clinton. Bee, you must make sure that Prince does not leave the place, for a dog who brings a message can carry one."

"You mean that the lieutenant might ask his general to send soldiers to take him away? That he would send Prince back to the English camp?" Bee asked, wondering, as she always did when thinking of Prince, how the dog had ever discovered his master's whereabouts.

"Yes, for while I am not pleased to harbor him, I should be sorry indeed not to give him safely to the custody of Washington," Mrs. Marsh answered. "And I want you to keep a sharp watch over Prince," she added. "Feed him, and make him your playfellow and above

all be sure that he is not long out of your sight."

Bee promised and resolved that Prince should be watched as carefully as though he were an English spy. Soon the dog began to divide his allegiance between his master and Bee, for the little girl fed him with so many choice bits, played such delightful games with him and took him to the brook for many a cool bath so that the dog was always ready to come at her call. He knew that it meant an exciting romp or some new delicacy. How Prince had discovered his master and what hardships he had undergone in his wanderings could never be known; but the first week of his stay at the Marsh farm must have rewarded him for all he had suffered. Not only his master and Bee fed and made much of him but Ring, Dilly, and Mrs. Marsh all made friends with the clever dog; and even Dot and Spot ceased to hiss and spit at him and in a few days accepted him as a member of the household.

"The eighteenth of June!" said the young Englishman, a little dolefully, as he made his way, now using only one crutch, to the porch where Bee was shelling peas for the midday meal. Prince was close at his master's heels and Dot

and Spot were frisking and circling about the low chair where Bee was sitting.

For a moment Bee did not answer. She was looking earnestly toward the lane hoping to see Sara and Susanna, for yesterday they had sent word by Ring, on his way home from Monmouth Court-House, that they were coming to see Bee, and she had at once begun plans to entertain them, and not until the lieutenant spoke again did Bee reply.

"This day ought to be one for you to rejoice in, Honeybee!" the young man said, "since 'tis the day when the King's forces will leave Philadelphia on what is no better than a retreat to New York," he added as if unconscious of a listener.

"They will land at Gloucester, I doubt not," he continued, with a sharp look at Bee as if to discover if the little maid had heard aught of the movements of the British army.

"I guess General Washington won't let them come as far as this," Bee said, taking up a fresh handful of the well-filled pods. "His army is all rested now and prob'ly he's going to make the English go home."

But now it was the lieutenant who did not

seem to hear. His glance was fixed on Chubby, who was drawing a cart toward a near-by field.

"That's your horse, isn't it?" he asked. "Does anyone ever ride it horseback?"

"Yes, indeed!" Bee said. "My father always rode Chubby. And, if he is fat, he can go as fast as most horses."

With a little smile the lieutenant seated himself and began questioning Bee about the three roads that centered at Monmouth Court-House; and before the last pea-pod was emptied Bee had told him of the old parsonage on the Middletown Road, of the wooded heights of Briar Hill and of various side-roads.

"But no stranger could find where he was going on those roads," she concluded and as she started to carry the shelled peas to the kitchen, she wondered why the young man had become so thoughtful and silent.

"It may be he likes not to have English soldiers retreat," Bee decided, as from the open kitchen door she caught a glimpse of the two gray bonnets that told her Sara and Susanna were close at hand. Bee ran to meet them, nor did she for several hours give another thought to the young Englishman or to the fact that

British forces were moving steadily on in the direction of her home.

Sara and Susanna were smiling as if delighted at the prospect of a day's visit with Bee; and as she led them up-stairs to take off their bonnets she exclaimed:

"I never saw you wear white dresses before," for both the little Quaker maids were dressed in gowns of white dimity and although these gowns were straight and plainly made they were cool and becoming, much prettier than the gray homespuns.

"And white stockings, too!" Susanna gleefully announced, lifting her long skirt to show her snow-white cotton stockings.

"We told Mother about dressing up the last time we came here, told her on the way home," said Sara, "and the very next day she cut out these nice dresses for us and helped us make them. She is more kind and generous than any other mother in the world!" and Sara nodded her head a number of times as if determined that no one should question her statement.

"Mother will not care if I have thy blue parasol all the time I am here," Susanna announced hopefully. But Bee did not offer her the parasol

and she was still puzzling over Mistress Gray's unexpected good-nature when Dilly's call to dinner started them all on their way down-stairs.

Lieutenant Compton now had his meals with the family. Usually he was very silent but to-day he talked with Sara and Susanna as if he too were a Quaker; and the usually quiet little girls laughed delightedly at his efforts to use "thee" and "thou" properly.

After dinner Mrs. Marsh left the room with Dilly, and Bee, leading the way to the porch, heard Sara say to the young lieutenant:

"Does Bee say when she means to deliver thee to General Washington?"

Bee gave a little gasp of amazement and turned quickly but it was too late. The little Quaker maid was telling the Englishman all Bee's most cherished plans as she walked beside him.

"And has she not yet told thee?" Bee heard Sara explain; "although thou art as much my prisoner as Melissa's and I would send thee back to thy friends. Did I not say I would, Melissa?" Sara questioned innocently as she found Bee standing directly in front of her.

"And so you are a Hornet instead of a

Honeybee!" said the lieutenant, looking sharply at Bee. "Evidently you believe that

> "'Great conquerors greater glory gain
> By foes in triumph led than slain.'

Well, we'll see. Come here, Prince," and without another word the prisoner started toward his room. Bee noticed that he moved more quickly than ever before and that he made but little use of the crutch. Realizing this a great fear entered her mind, the fear that Lieutenant Compton would escape; and for the moment she forgot to be angry at Sara for so clearly telling the Englishman what she planned to do. It was Sara who, slipping her hand over Bee's arm, broke the little silence by saying:

"And what is thy plan, Bee? Thou saidst thou had a plan for us to play games with thy dolls?"

"Where's Susanna?" Bee asked before responding to Sara's question, as she discovered that she and Sara were alone on the porch.

"She was right here! I know not what became of her!" declared the puzzled Sara.

"She must have followed Mother and Dilly," said Bee, "but 'tis no matter; she will soon re-

turn or we'll call to her on our way to the barn chamber. For, what think you, Sara! My mother has given me the big loft for a playhouse. Ring has swept it all clean and I carried Emmeline and Rosalind and all their things out there this morning and there they sit expecting us to come. It's a lovely playhouse, Sara!"

The loft of the big barn that stood near the head of the lane was indeed a lovely playhouse. At each end were wide doors that now stood open to the warm air of the June day and as Sara and Bee climbed the ladder and stepped into the big loft, fragrant from many a year's storage of clover-scented hay, Sara exclaimed with delight and Bee with happy surprise.

For since her morning visit the loft had had other visitors. Mrs. Marsh and Dilly had filled several large bags with hay, and these were arranged as seats near the big door-like window that faced toward the lane. A big rug of braided rags was spread in front of these seats and on this rug stood a low table and near it the two little yellow rocking-chairs in which sat Emmeline and Rosalind. On the table was a yellow bowl filled with white roses and near it a plate heaped with ginger cookies.

To Sara it seemed the most delightful playhouse possible. She ran from window to window; she tried each one of the seats, she made clumsy curtseys before Emmeline and Rosalind and then she and Bee, both laughing and well pleased, sat down near the dolls and both exclaimed, " Where can Susanna be? " for they had called her name as they ran toward the barn, expecting to see the little girl running to meet them; but Susanna had not appeared, and her sister and Bee now began to wonder where she could be. But they had begun to eat the excellent cookies, to talk over all the games that could be played in this cool, big loft and, sure that Susanna could not be far away, Sara and Melissa again quite forgot the younger girl.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BARN LOFT

It was the blue parasol that had caused Susanna to disappear. Ever since the day of her last visit to Bee the thoughts of the little Quaker maid had lingered about the beauty of the soft blue silken sunshade. Having no doubt that Bee was willing for her to again enjoy it, she had gone swiftly up the stairs to Bee's chamber, taken the parasol from its place in the closet and while Bee and Sara were on their way to the loft Susanna was happily seated on the cushioned window-box holding the opened parasol over her head and smiling up at the soft blue that made so pleasant a shade above her head.

"I'll just stay a little while and then I'll put it back in the closet and go down-stairs," thought Susanna, quite sure there could be no harm in sitting quietly by this open window and having no idea of the wonderful playroom where her sister and Bee were so joyously occupied with freshly baked cookies, the dolls and freedom to play whatever games they might please.

Everything about the quiet house seemed to speak of peace and safety, yet already detachments of the British army had crossed Cooper's Ferry, where, as an outpost under General Abercrombie, Hessian and English regiments had been quartered and where brave Count Pulaski had, in March, so narrowly escaped ambush. Other detachments of English soldiers were crossing the Delaware at near-by points. Americans were now burning bridges, barricading roads and endeavoring to hold up the advancing army; and General Washington was marshalling his troops to follow and intercept the enemy.

Lieutenant Compton, lounging in his room, was the only unhappy person at Marsh farm that June day. He was anxious and troubled by Sara's announcement that Bee considered him her prisoner.

"I must get away at once. Americans as well as English will be on the march and at any hour I may be taken prisoner," he thought uneasily and the young man began to make a definite plan for escape. He resolved to make his way to Chubby's stable, saddle and lead the horse to the lane and be off, taking his chances of reaching the oncoming English troops on the highway.

"I'll wait till dusk," he decided, wishing it were possible for him to bid Mrs. Marsh, Honeybee and Dilly and Ring a friendly farewell, and thank them for their care of him. A roll of English banknotes and a few pieces of gold were safely fastened in a pocket of his uniform and Lieutenant Compton now carefully wrapped the bills in a paper on which he wrote Mrs. Marsh's name and below this, "Payment for Chubby. I will return him if possible. My grateful thanks," and his store of gold pieces were piled on this note. Then the young man started off across the yard to test the strength of the now nearly recovered leg.

The afternoon was well advanced when Susanna, who had fallen asleep on the comfortable window-box, suddenly awakened, picked up the parasol and carefully restored it to its place in Bee's closet, then started down the stairs eager to find her sister and Bee. Dilly directed her to the loft but no sooner did Susanna appear than Sara promptly declared that it was time for them to be on their way home.

"Wherever have you been, Susanna?" asked Bee, as Susanna ran about the loft admiring the wide open windows, the comfortable seats and

exclaiming over the stout rope swing that was fastened to the rafters.

"We must go home at once," Sara declared before Susanna had time to answer Bee's question. "And thy prisoner is coming to the barn with Ring, Melissa," she added, as looking down the lane she saw the lieutenant hobbling along beside Ring.

But this seemed of no special importance to Bee and as the three little girls made their careful way down the steep ladder to the barn floor Ring was just leading Chubby to his stall, while the lieutenant was looking at a saddle that hung near by.

He smiled and nodded as the little girls passed him and Bee thought that the time was really close at hand when some way must be found for her to carry out the plan she had made on the first sight of his red coat to deliver him into Washington's hands as a prisoner.

Sara and Susanna said their good-byes to Mrs. Marsh and Bee walked down the lane with them. Susanna had told of her visit to Bee's room, of going to sleep while holding the beautiful blue parasol over her head and had finished her story by saying:

"I mean to ask my mother to get me a blue parasol!"

Sara regarded her younger sister with so much horror that Bee laughed aloud.

"Our mother does not wish us to set our wishes on vain things," she said reprovingly. "Thou knowest she will not get thee a parasol."

"Well, Susanna, you can have mine whenever you come to see me," said Bee and Susanna instantly declared that perhaps she could come the very next day.

At the end of the lane Bee bade her little visitors good-bye and started toward home, turning once or twice to call and wave to the gray-bonneted little figures who called back their good-byes. Not one of them could possibly have imagined that a terrible battle would rage at Monmouth Court-House; that over that very road regiments of American soldiers under General Anthony Wayne, Generals Morgan, Maxwell, Scott, Dickinson and Forman, with General Washington and the brave Lafayette in command, were to meet and defeat the English in one of the greatest battles of the Revolutionary War, the only battle in which all thirteen colonies of America took part.

The day had been very warm, and now as the long twilight approached a pleasant coolness was creeping over the quiet fields and Bee walked slowly toward home thinking of the big loft and smiling happily to herself as she remembered that Sara and Susanna had declared they would like to sleep there.

" It would indeed be a pleasant place to sleep or to look through the open doorways and watch the stars," thought Bee. " I'd like well to do it," and the thought lingered in her mind as Dilly's call made her quicken her pace.

And as she brushed her hair and made ready for supper Bee again thought of it and before supper was over she was resolved to sleep that night in the barn loft. Mrs. Marsh was surprised at Bee's readiness to go to bed at an unusually early hour.

" I am sleepy myself," she said, in response to Bee's good-night, " and as I mean to be up before sunrise to-morrow morning 'twill be well for me to follow your example," and mother and daughter went up the stairs together.

But once inside her own chamber Bee made no preparations for bed. She stood listening for a few moments and then ran lightly back to the

porch. Dilly had not yet closed the doors for the night; the long twilight of the June day was but beginning to deepen into dusk as the little girl, keeping well in the shadow of the shrubs and trees, made her way through the garden, ran swiftly across the yard and into the stable, whose doors Ring had not yet closed.

She had just reached the ladder when she heard someone approaching, and believing it to be Ring and not wishing to be discovered, she climbed up as rapidly as possible. She had only set her foot on the floor of the loft when she discovered that it was not Ring's step at the stable door but that of someone using a crutch. " 'Tis my prisoner!" thought Bee and crouching flat the little girl peered down into the shadowy stable, wondering a little fearfully what had brought the English soldier there at that hour.

Chubby was crunching his evening feed of oats, and, but for the cautious steps of the newcomer as he entered the shadowy stable, there was no sound to be heard. Bee could see his dark figure move to the wall where her father's saddle hung and at that moment Ring's whistle sounded cheerfully from the gathering darkness; the stable door was swung to and Bee heard the snap

of the padlock; then Ring's retreating steps and his whistle grew fainter.

"He's fastened the door!" the little girl whispered to herself; "however will the lieutenant get out? And whyever did he not call to Ring before he was locked in?" For Bee had not yet suspected the errand that brought Lieutenant Compton to Chubby's stable.

She heard him mutter angrily and knew that he was making his way along the wall to where a small door opened into the field. This door was hooked on the inside and Bee's alert ears heard the hook lifted. The door was thrown open and for a moment she believed the Englishman had gone. Then she heard him bid Prince be quiet.

"He's back where Father's saddle is," she realized a moment later and now Bee knew exactly what the lieutenant meant to do. "He is going to take Chubby and escape," she told herself; "however will I stop him?" and instantly Bee's feet were on the rounds of the steep ladder and when the lieutenant led Chubby from the stall and fastened the saddle, Bee was on the barn floor making her way toward the open door.

"If I can get outside I'll slam it and call Ring. I know we can stop him," she thought, but at

that moment her foot hit the handle of a rake resting against the wall, and it came clattering to the floor with so much racket that Chubby jumped and snorted. Bee unconsciously gave a startled exclamation and Prince gave a short, quick bark.

That instant a grasp on Bee's shoulder made her cry out.

"Keep quiet!" The lieutenant's voice was so sharp that Bee hardly knew it. She felt the twist of a handkerchief over her mouth, and then the command, "Come along," and she was half-pushed, half-led toward the open door, with Chubby so close beside her that once she stumbled against him.

Bee was afterward to wonder how the lame soldier had managed to mount the horse and draw her up in front of him; but this he did and guided Chubby back to the lane. He urged the fat horse into its most rapid pace nor did he speak a word until they were on the highway; and then Bee realized that he was talking.

"You've turned out a Hornet, after all, little maid. You'd have had a regiment after me if I'd left you behind and yet I know not what to do with you. But I remember you told me of

wood roads hereabout, of one turning before we reach the village of Monmouth. I'd like well to keep clear of villages until I'm near my own army. Point me the side of the road where the wood road turns in!" he commanded, but as Bee made no motion, his voice took a sterner note.

"You'd best obey, little maid, or 'twill be a long day before you see your home again. Do as I bid and no harm shall befall you, I promise, and the English fail not to reward their friends."

Bee moved uneasily. She wanted to say that she would never accept aught from those who had invaded her country, that she would never aid him. But she could only make a muffled noise from behind the bandage over her mouth. But the lieutenant was not depending wholly upon her. He was peering through the dusk, glancing from one side to the other and soon discovered the entrance to the wood road Bee had taken on the morning when she had started to carry the Hessian's note to General Washington, a dim opening stretching into the forest, and the lieutenant turned Chubby into it.

"This is the road, though thou didst not point it out, Miss Hornet! But once beyond Monmouth Village I'll strike the highway and I

doubt not soon fall in with Clinton's army. Then I'll take that handkerchief from thy mouth," he concluded in a more friendly tone. Prince kept pace with Chubby, now and then giving a joyous bark as if thinking this ride had been planned especially for his pleasure. But Bee paid no further attention to Prince.

CHAPTER XV

PRINCE INTERFERES

On the morning of June 19th, 1778, when Mrs. Marsh discovered the mysterious disappearance of her little daughter, and that Lieutenant Compton and Chubby had also vanished, the army of England, commanded by General Sir Henry Clinton, and American troops under General George Washington, were on the march across New Jersey.

On hearing that the English had evacuated Philadelphia General Washington had promptly prepared to follow them and attack them at the first opportunity. Jersey troops, under General Maxwell, and the militia commanded by General Dickinson, were on the alert and on the morning of June 19th, 1778, the remaining brigades of the American army were on the march.

The countryside had by this time become alarmed; patriotic citizens formed themselves into armed regiments to intercept and harass the enemy; and General Clinton, hampered by a

baggage train that stretched for miles behind his marching army, made but slow progress.

At an early hour that morning Ring came running to the house with the news of Chubby's mysterious disappearance. "An' de door lock jus' as I leave it las' night!" he declared. But Mrs. Marsh speedily discovered the unfastened side-door and knew that the horse had been led out through the field to the lane. It was an hour later that Dilly announced that Lieutenant Compton's bed had not been slept in and that he was not to be found.

"He's made off wid our hoss, dat's w'ot. Af'er me a-feedin' him on de bes' dar was!" exclaimed the wrathful Dilly, and on finding that Bee, too, had vanished she threatened to start off at once in pursuit of the English soldier, sure that he was to blame for Bee's disappearance.

But anxious and alarmed as Mrs. Marsh was by Bee's absence, she did not at first blame the English soldier, remembering Bee's plan to deliver him to General Washington as a prisoner. Mrs. Marsh feared that her little daughter had, in some way that her mother could not even imagine, started off with Chubby and her prisoner in the hope of carrying out her plan.

"What ever will become of the child?" she thought, finding some little comfort in the belief that the young Englishman would do his best to protect the little girl from harm. But when she found the gold with the lieutenant's note, Mrs. Marsh no longer believed that Bee was with him and, with Dilly and Ring muttering and exclaiming, she searched house and stable, field and pasture, and not until nightfall did she give up hope. Ring was sent to the Grays' but no one there had seen Bee since Sara and Susanna had parted from her on the previous day.

A summer rain had begun to fall as the evening set in and a thick haze lay over the countryside. Mrs. Marsh realized it was useless to wander about in search of Bee.

"It may be she went to Monmouth Village and will be home to-morrow; or the child may even have started to visit Madam Freneau," thought Bee's unhappy mother. But she could not forget that Bee had promised, after her journey in the coach, not to run away again, and so found but little comfort in these possibilities as day after day passed and no news of Bee's whereabouts could be discovered, nor of Chubby or of the English soldier. Mrs. Marsh became

convinced that Bee had indeed started off in the endeavor to reach her father and, with every day bringing the certainty of a battle between the forces of England and America nearer at hand, Mrs. Marsh's thoughts were centered on her little daughter and the many perils that might assail her.

But Bee, during these days just before the Battle of Monmouth, had met with many an adventure. On the night of the lieutenant's escape, when he had believed it a danger to leave Bee behind, he had untied the handkerchief from her head as soon as they entered the wood road so that Bee could breathe more freely of the soft fragrant air of the June night. Chubby jogged on at so even a pace that Bee's head began to nod and it was not long before, resting against the shoulder of the Englishman, she was fast asleep.

" 'Tis a shame to take the little maid so far from home," thought the young man regretfully, remembering that he had been treated with unexpected kindness in Bee's home. But he also recalled as he guided Chubby over the rough road that this same little maid had declared her intention of delivering him a prisoner and he

smiled, thinking it an absurd idea that a child could even imagine such a possibility. Once on the highway he sent the horse along at a good pace, on the alert for every sound that might tell him of other travelers, but after a few hours Chubby refused to be urged out of a walk. Now and then he would stop and turn his head toward his rider as if to ask the meaning of this night journey and one of these stops awoke Bee.

" 'Tis a nuisance to stop now," she heard the lieutenant mutter, turning the horse from the road into an open field where he carefully dismounted and Bee slid to the ground.

" You may as well finish your sleep here, Miss Hornet," said the lieutenant, as he fastened Chubby's bridle rein to a young birch tree and settled himself in the soft grass, thinking that at the first house he would leave the little girl and hurry on.

The soft darkness of the summer night was changing to dawn when Bee awoke and looked about her; the lieutenant was fast asleep. Chubby, with drooping head, was within arm's reach.

Very softly the little girl rose to her feet; she

untied Chubby's bridle rein, and as she did so her old resolve to deliver the English soldier as a prisoner flashed into her mind. Instantly she thought that it would be easy to mount Chubby and bring Americans to capture her companion but, as she was about to lead the horse toward a near-by stump, from which she could mount to his back, she felt a pull at her skirt and looking down found that Prince was tugging at it; nor would he, in spite of her whispered commands, loosen his hold.

"Oh, Prince! You're spoiling everything," she whispered angrily; but the dog only pulled back the more, so that the little girl had to refasten Chubby, realizing that Prince was sure to alarm his master and that she would have to wait for another chance to carry out her plan. She had but settled herself with Prince close beside her when the lieutenant started up wide awake and eager to be off.

But he did not venture back to the highway, keeping instead to the fields and pasture lands that skirted the road. Twice that morning he had been in danger of an encounter as parties of armed Americans dashed along the road and but for the concealment given by thickly growing

trees Chubby and his riders could not have escaped being seen.

At noon a mist was creeping over the fields and it began to rain. Chubby was once more turned to the main traveled road and had gone only a short distance when he stopped so suddenly that Bee was nearly thrown over his head.

"What's this! A redcoat and a little maid, and a dog!" Bee looked down into the face of the man who had journeyed with her in the coach and who had made off with the Hessian's letter. He now had Chubby by the bridle rein, and three other American soldiers stood near. Instantly Bee remembered that the Monmouth storekeeper had said that this man's name was Peter Vinal and she said quickly:

"This is an English prisoner, and I am taking him to General Washington."

The Americans laughed loudly.

"The girl is a Tory child. I have proof of that," declared Peter Vinal. "I myself took from her a message written by an English soldier, a message that was of value. And now she talks of this man being her prisoner!" and again came the laugh of derision.

"The little maid is thirsty and hungry," said

the young lieutenant and Bee knew that her "prisoner" was almost too tired to speak, that he realized that he was indeed a prisoner. Prince kept close to his master as if fearing another separation.

Peter Vinal took charge of Bee and although she told him her own name and her father's he would not believe her but bade her be quiet.

"You can tell your tale to General Charles Lee before long," he said. But he had given his captives a drink of cool water at a wayside spring and a few bits of hard bread that they ate eagerly. Early in the afternoon they rode into a dooryard and dismounted. Lieutenant Compton followed by Prince was led away by three of the Americans while Peter Vinal bade Bee follow him into the weather-beaten little house that stood well back from the road.

In spite of the rain the day was very warm, the roads were wet and Bee's dress and stockings were spattered with mud. Her usually well-brushed hair was rough and untidy and her face streaked with dirt, so it was no wonder that the woman who opened the door held up both hands in amazement and exclaimed:

"What ever have we here, Peter?"

"'Tis a Tory maid, sister. We captured her with an English soldier 'twixt here and Monmouth and you are to search her well. She has carried messages before this!"

"Why, I can scarce believe it!" and the woman's kind face grew puzzled as she looked at the bedraggled little maid who stood so near her.

"I am *not* a Tory maid!" declared Bee. "I'm tired," she ended, leaning so heavily against Miss Vinal that the good woman's arm went quickly about her and turning to her brother she said sharply:

"She's but a little maid, Tory or no Tory. Talk not of captures of children. She's worn out. I'll take charge of her and you look to your men."

"Let her not out of your sight," Peter gravely warned his sister. "I'll wager she could give us brave news of English plans," but before he had finished Miss Vinal had lifted Bee into a comfortable chair and kneeling beside her drew off the wet shoes and stockings. Bee was almost too tired and hungry to realize all that was so promptly done for her comfort. But it was pleasant, she thought, to bathe in cool water and to have a white nightgown that smelled of laven-

der slipped over her head, then to be bolstered up with pillows in a big cushiony bed and eat all the warm corn cake and cool milk that she wanted. Indeed, she went to sleep before she had quite finished and when Miss Vinal tiptoed from the room she did not even fasten the door behind her.

"Peter and his notions!" she whispered to herself. "I'll warrant that child knows naught of what he means and he'll not take her a step further."

But, greatly to Miss Vinal's surprise, when Bee awoke the next morning she was eager to accompany Peter and his companions.

"Lieutenant Compton will tell you that I speak the truth. He *is* my prisoner," she insisted and told the tale of the accident that had befallen the English soldier and of her meeting with the Hessian. "I was wearing Sara Gray's Quaker bonnet," she explained, "so the Hessian took me for a friend to the English and gave me the letter that Mr. Vinal took from my pocket."

"The Englishman tells the same tale, except he knew not of the Hessian, and seemed vexed at that," Peter told his sister. When Bee explained that Chubby was her father's horse and

that she had discovered the Englishman just as he was leaving the Marsh stable, " and he said he dared not leave me behind lest I bring a regiment of Americans after him," Peter chuckled and declared that he had but been joking when he called her a Tory maid.

" But 'twas good luck I made off with the Hessian's note, little maid," he said, " for 'twas of use to the Americans."

And Bee's response that her mother had said the same convinced Peter and his sister that Bee had indeed told the truth, and Peter firmly resolved that Bee should have all the credit for the capture of an English officer.

" Nor will we bother with General Charles Lee. You shall see Washington himself," he promised.

" And I will see my father, will I not? He has been with General Washington since March," said Bee eagerly; but this was more than Peter could promise. For a day or two Bee must be content to stay where she was, he said, and Miss Vinal seemed well pleased with this.

" Thy mother will soon know that you are safe with friendly folk, little maid," she assured Bee, knowing that the little girl was troubled lest her

mother should think serious harm had befallen her. "But now soldiers are marching along all the highways, and 'tis best you stay in safety with me until General Washington has encountered the escaping English," and, seeing the surprised look on Bee's face, she nodded and said: "To be sure, 'tis but their effort to escape to New York. Their time of conquest is past, nor will they leave this state before Washington has taught them a lesson."

Miss Vinal was right. General Clinton's army was to receive its lesson at Monmouth Court-House; and Bee, listening to her new friend and wondering how long it would be before she was again at home, was destined to hear the roll of guns, to watch the advance of fearless troops and to see brave "Molly Pitcher" bring water to the faint and wounded soldiers on the field of battle; "Molly Pitcher," whose name was not "Pitcher" at all, but Molly Ludwig Hays, and whose valor is recorded in history, for at the Battle of Monmouth when her husband fell beside his gun she ran forward and took his place.

But for several days Bee was to stay quietly with Peter Vinal's sister in the little shingled cottage between Crosswicks and Bordentown.

CHAPTER XVI

DART

Miss Vinal was well pleased to have Bee's company, for the next morning her brother and his companions left at an early hour, taking the young Englishman and the faithful Prince with them. When Bee came into the pleasant little kitchen and heard this news she felt but little appetite for the hot corn porridge in the blue china bowl that Miss Vinal had ready for her.

"My brother left a message for thee, little maid," said Miss Vinal, as she noticed Bee's sober face. "He bade me say that he had but taken thy prisoner to a place of safety and that thou should indeed see thy father and General Washington if it could be managed and that right soon," and Miss Vinal's face was so cheerful, and she smiled as if so confident that Peter could do whatever needed to be done, that Bee smiled in response and began to feel that she was not only safe with friends, as indeed she was, but that she would soon be journeying homeward with her father.

The little girl looked about the room with new interest and thought she would well like to have just such a kitchen.

" This is like a make-believe kitchen. It is so shiny and yellow. It is as yellow as a gold sovereign," she said admiringly, looking at the yellow painted floor, at the pale yellow walls and at the shining yellow of the wooden sink. The two square windows with their tiny window-panes shone in the glimmer of sunlight between snowy curtains of hand-woven linen, and even the high-backed wooden chairs and the round table were as yellow as an orange. When a fat yellow cat appeared in the open doorway Bee exclaimed with delight and Goldie, as Miss Vinal introduced the newcomer, was quite ready to make friends with the little girl.

Miss Vinal insisted that Bee's stockings and dress must be washed and ironed and that morning Bee ran about the grassy yard in her bare feet, with a loose cotton sack of Miss Vinal's as a dress. She discovered a flock of yellow chickens in a yard behind the barn and began to think that everything belonging to Miss Vinal must be the color of sunlight.

Before the end of the first day Bee had told her

new friend all about her sister Nancy, who was visiting Aunt Amy in Princeton, and about Sara and Susanna Gray and their Quaker mother. Miss Vinal had brought from an upper chamber a doll that she had treasured since her own childhood.

" My father brought her from London," Miss Vinal said as she let Bee take the doll, whose china head was adorned with black painted ringlets, whose cheeks were red and whose eyes were black, but her dress was of yellow silk, with rows of tiny ruffles from waist to hem.

Bee laughed with pleasure when from a tiny trunk Miss Vinal took a little cape of yellow velvet and a small hat with a golden feather and when Miss Vinal said that the doll's name was *Capella,* after one of the brightest of the heavenly bodies, Bee resolved that as soon as she reached home she would rename her own dolls. Miss Vinal agreed that Capella and Alcyone were lovelier names than Emmeline and Rosalind.

" And I have two little rocking-chairs for my dolls," Bee declared, as she sat on the kitchen doorstep holding Capella with Goldie curled up beside her.

" If I didn't forget all about Capella's chair! "

exclaimed Miss Vinal, hurrying away to the upper chamber to return with a little yellow rocking-chair so very like those belonging to Bee that the little girl felt more than ever at home with her new friend.

Miss Vinal was constantly discovering things she had treasured from her own childhood; a set of small dishes, white with bands of gold, were among these and she was as ready as Bee herself to play tea-party with Bee and Capella and Goldie.

But, while the days passed happily, Bee hoped each one might bring Peter Vinal with news of her father. The weather was becoming intensely hot and Miss Vinal knew that a few miles distant, at Crosswicks Village, the local militia had given battle to the advancing English, that at Bordentown the King's troops were destroying the houses of loyal Americans and one morning Bee was awakened by Miss Vinal and bidden to dress as quickly as possible.

"Peter is waiting for thee," she said; "he is on scout duty, and hopes to take thee straight home before the English army fills the highways. I am safe enough here, hidden away in the forest, but Peter truly says thy mother must be sadly

anxious about thee," and Miss Vinal hurried the little girl down the stairs where the blue bowl was filled with porridge and cool milk. When Bee had eaten, she tied a white sunbonnet over the little girl's head and led her across the yard to the opening of a wood-path where Peter, mounted on a gray horse, with a gray pony standing near by, was awaiting them.

With a brief word of greeting Peter bade his sister help Bee to mount the pony, and before the little girl had time to say a word to the friendly woman who had been so good to her Peter had grasped the pony's bridle rein and started down the path and the thickly growing foliage shut away the cottage from Bee's backward glance.

"But I'll come again," she promised herself, for Miss Vinal and her neat little house with all its treasures now occupied a warm corner in Bee's heart.

The morning was very warm; there was no air stirring and although Peter kept for some distance well in the shade of forest trees, Bee was soon wishing for a cool drink and hoping they would not have to ride far. The pony trotted along beside or close behind the big horse

and at any other time Bee would have found delight in riding so pretty and gentle a creature. But now she could think only of a possible meeting with her father and of being once more safely at home.

It was the morning of June 26th, 1778. Sir Henry Clinton with the main part of his army had turned eastward and on the following day was to camp at Monmouth Court-House. All the way from Crosswicks, American troops under Dickinson and Morgan kept within firing distance of the slow-moving, heavily laden English. The main American army, "almost starving," had come to a halt at the village of Cranberry. The English and American armies were now less than five miles apart and both commanders knew that a battle was near at hand. As Peter Vinal rode through the quiet woods that morning, with Bee on the gray pony trotting behind him, his thoughts were upon General Charles Lee who was expected to lead an attack on Clinton's army but whose delay was nearly to defeat the Americans.

Coming near to a brook Peter drew rein and dismounted and Bee was as glad to drink as were the thirsty pony and horse.

"I'll have thee home before midday," said Peter, as he lifted Bee to the pony's back. "This very brook flows not far from thy father's house."

"Oh! 'Tis surely the pine woods brook!" exclaimed Bee. "Could I not follow it by myself?"

But Peter shook his head. "I promised thy father I would see thee safely to thy mother and I have business near by," he said and Bee was eager to hear all Peter could tell her of her father. Peter told her that Captain Marsh was now with a detachment under Lafayette that General Washington had sent forward to join Lee.

"You will soon see him," he promised her, and then told her that the young Englishman and Prince had been safely delivered at Washington's camp. "And General Washington knows they were captured by a little maid of Monmouth town," he added, smiling down on the little girl whose face was hidden under Miss Vinal's white sunbonnet.

But Bee no longer cared for the honor of delivering a prisoner into the hands of the great American general. She was thinking of her mother and of what happiness it would be to be

again at home, to see Dilly and Ring, Dot and Spot and ——

"Where is Chubby?" she suddenly exclaimed.

"Chubby?" echoed the puzzled Peter.

"Our horse! That the English soldier rode! Oh! Where is Chubby!" Bee exclaimed, quite forgetting battles and prisoners in the fear that some harm had befallen the fat brown horse, so gentle and amiable.

"Oh! The fat horse! Why, thy father was glad enough to take him, I can tell you. Chubby? Well, 'tis a good name for a good horse," and Peter chuckled approvingly as he turned into a ravine and hurried horse and pony into a swifter pace, and no more was said until Bee recognized the pine-covered slope where she and Sara had played and where the Hessian had given her the letter.

"Mr. Vinal! I can go straight across the pasture here and be at home in a few minutes," she said, stopping the pony and starting to dismount; but Peter's words kept her from leaving the pony's back.

"Did I not say the pony was yours? To be sure it is. From Madam Freneau, at whose place I stopped yesterday. Its name is Dart,

and she bade me deliver him to you with her best wishes."

For a moment Bee could not speak. A pony, and from Madam Freneau! And her own home just across the pasture! And when Peter Vinal bade her good-bye she could only stammer out her grateful thanks.

"I must find out what's moving at Monmouth Court-House," said Peter, and was soon out of sight; and Bee, leading Dart by his bridle, made her way across the pasture and into the familiar lane.

The week that had passed seemed a very long time to the little girl and as she neared the stable from which she had been carried away by the escaping soldier a sudden shout made her stop short.

"Fo' de lan' sake! It am Missy Bee!" shouted Ring, who standing in the stable door had watched the approach of Bee and the gray pony and now realized that this really was the little mistress who had so strangely disappeared. He came running to meet her and a moment later a joyful shout from the kitchen door told that Dilly also had discovered her, and their shouts brought Mrs. Marsh flying across the yard.

Bee felt her mother's arms about her and joyfully exclaimed:

"Oh, Mother! I'm never going away again!"

There was so much for Bee to tell her mother about her plan to sleep in the barn chamber and what had so swiftly followed that the afternoon passed only too quickly, and in the joy of having her little daughter once more safely at home Mrs. Marsh almost forgot that marching armies were on the highways and that every New Jersey homestead was in danger.

Nor could she blame Bee for all the anxiety of the past week for, after all, the little girl had really delivered the young Englishman a prisoner to Americans; and who could say how valuable his capture might prove!

That night the little household slept peacefully. On the following day, however, Saturday, June 27th, 1778, they were all to realize that danger was close at hand. British Grenadiers in coats of scarlet, towering Hessians in brass-fronted caps, blue coats and yellow breeches, were to encamp at Monmouth Court-House, a splendidly appointed army with its long train of artillery and baggage stretching along the road toward Middletown. And here on June 28th

they were to be attacked and defeated by Americans in linen shirts and trousers of homespun; Americans who after a winter of hardship at Valley Forge were to win one of the most important battles of the American Revolution.

CHAPTER XVII

VISITORS

When Bee awoke on the morning after her return from her mysterious journey, she found Dilly smiling at her from the open doorway.

"Comp'ny, Miss M'lissa!" she whispered. "An' de mornin' am ter'bul hot. Yo' better put on a thin dress. Yas'm!" and Dilly vanished, leaving Bee to wonder what possible guests could have arrived at so early an hour.

"Maybe it is Madam Freneau," she thought hopefully, for Bee was eager to tell her kind friend that the gray pony was now her dearest possession. "And I will let her see how easily I can mount and dismount," thought Bee, brushing her hair even more carefully than usual and putting on a thin green and white checked dimity dress. As she stood in the doorway of the dining-room she was ready to make as pretty a curtsey as possible in greeting to Madam Freneau.

But is was not Madam Freneau; and Bee's sudden exclamation, "Oh, it's only you!" made

Sara and Susanna both flush uncomfortably and wish themselves at home. It had seemed a long time to the little Quaker girls since they had seen Bee and they had expected a warm welcome, sure that Bee must have a wonderful story to tell them of her adventures, as indeed she had. To be greeted in so unexpected a manner made them uncomfortable and unhappy. Susanna's glance seemed to ask Sara what was the trouble and Sara slid from her chair and, standing very straight, said in her most Quaker-like way:

" I trust we find thee well, Melissa! "

" Oh, Sara! I'm so glad to see you and Susanna! Did you know that I was carried off? Has Mother told you what befell me? It's wonderful that you are the ' company '! I thought it was grown-ups," and Bee ran across the room clasping the hands of the little Quakers and smiling with such evident delight that Sara and Susanna smiled in response and quite forgot their moment of unhappiness.

" Our mother said 'twas best for us to come in the cool of the morning," Sara explained, " and thy mother said 'twas a wise thought," Susanna announced, as Dilly brought in the warm corn bread, the fresh berries and cool milk on

which the three little girls were to breakfast; for Mrs. Marsh had breakfasted at an earlier hour.

"I am so glad you are here early," continued Bee, as Sara and Susanna took off their spotless white sunbonnets and sat down at the round table near the open window. They each wore the same white dimity dress that they had worn on their last visit; and as Bee's glance rested on Sara's curling golden hair she exclaimed:

"Oh, Sara! You ought to have a house just like Miss Vinal's. It has a yellow kitchen and yellow furniture and a yellow cat and yellow chickens!"

Sara and Susanna stared at Bee in amazement.

"Who is 'Miss Vinal'?" they both asked at the same moment; so Bee began at the very beginning of her story and told of her plan to sleep in the barn loft, of Lieutenant Compton's attempt to escape and of his final capture by Peter Vinal.

"And Miss Vinal is Peter's sister," she continued. "And, oh, Sara! I wish you could see Capella!"

"Who is Capella?" Susanna asked.

"A doll! A beautiful doll from London; I

mean to rename Rosalind. She is to be Capella; and Emmeline is to be Alcyone," said Bee, and described all Capella's golden colored gowns and told of the little yellow chairs so exactly like her own.

" It sounds lovely," said Susanna with a little sigh, " but 'twould not be seemly for little Quaker maids to have things such as you tell us of, Melissa."

Bee frowned a little at hearing the " Melissa," but she quickly remembered that one must never show resentment toward a guest, and she began to tell them of the gray pony that Madam Freneau had sent her.

" His name is Dart and I can saddle and bridle him myself. That is," she explained, " Ring says I can quickly learn."

And again Sara and Susanna exclaimed in chorus: " A pony! " and Sara quickly added:

" Thou hast everything, Melissa! "

Bee moved a little uneasily in her chair. She wished she had another pony to give to Sara and Susanna, and she also wished they had a yellow kitchen or a yellow cat.

" If Dot or Spot were only yellow I'd give them to Sara," she thought; but the two caper-

ing kittens, who were now making themselves into balls of gray fur under the breakfast table, could never be yellow kittens.

" Come out to the stable and see Dart," said Bee when the three girls had finished their dish of blueberries and cream. " You shall each have a ride if you wish," she added, as they ran across the yard.

In a near-by shed Ring was busily at work with a queer looking mixture that he was stirring in a bucket and the girls stopped to look. Bee asked what he was doing.

" I'se jes' a-stirrin' up a leetle spec' o' paint fer dis ole wheelbarrer," Ring explained, sitting back on his heels and smiling up at the little girls.

" Gwine ter be ter'bul hot, so I'se jes' chorin' roun'," he added, giving the mixture another stir and dabbing it on the sides of the stout wheelbarrow that stood near him.

" It's yellow!" Bee exclaimed, and Ring nodded.

" Dat's what I reckoned on," he said and instantly a plan flashed into Bee's head.

" Will there be any paint left, Ring?" she asked and again Ring nodded.

"Rec'on dar'll be considerbul lef', Missy," and Bee asked no further questions but hurried her companions to the stable where Dart whinnied a welcome from his stall.

Bee grasped the pony's thick mane and led him to the center of the stable floor where the gentle little creature stood quietly looking first at Bee and then at the two white-clad little figures some distance away who were eying the pony a little fearfully.

"Come and pat his neck, Sara," urged Bee. "And, Susanna, will you not hold him by the mane while I get his bridle?" Rather cautiously Sara and Susanna came near and obeyed Bee's suggestions, and by the time Dart was saddled and bridled Sara and Susanna felt quite at home with him.

"Susanna must have the first ride because she's the youngest," Bee announced as she led Dart toward a block of wood near the stable door and bade Susanna mount from it to the pony's back which the little Quakeress did very easily. Bee gave her the bridle reins and the happy Susanna rode Dart down the lane with Bee and Sara running along beside him.

At the foot of the lane, obedient to Bee's,

"Whoa, Dart, whoa!" he stopped promptly and Susanna dismounted for Sara to take her place to ride back to the stable; but before Sara had started to mount Bee saw her mother coming down the lane and said:

"Wait just a minute, Sara."

Mrs. Marsh admired the pony and thought as Bee so often did that the soft curling golden rings of Sara's hair were the prettiest thing in the world and that it was a pity to hide them under a close bonnet.

"What do you suppose I found in my pocket?" Mrs. Marsh asked, turning to smile at Bee, and Bee instantly exclaimed:

"A letter from Nancy!"

But Mrs. Marsh shook her head, and held out a small round package wrapped in a yellow paper and tied with a green string and held it toward Bee who laughed delightedly.

"It's gooseberries! Candy gooseberries! I'm sure it is," she said and Mrs. Marsh answered:

"Yes, I got them the day I went to Monmouth when you were lost!"

"Only I wasn't really lost, Mother," Bee responded soberly untying the package and offering its contents to Susanna and Sara who each

selected a gooseberry with so radiant a smile that Mrs. Marsh rejoiced that she had thought to bring them. These little Quaker children were not often indulged in delicacies.

Dart whinnied a little impatiently at being so completely forgotten, for the little girls had climbed the wall and were sitting in the shade of the wide-spreading branches of the big oak tree. The pony began to nibble at the bunches of fragrant pink clover that grew near by, and as Mrs. Marsh looked at the three happy smiling girls, at the pony cropping the fragrant clover and the quiet field and woods stretching off to the distant hills, she could hardly believe the news that Peter Vinal had brought of armies on the march ready for battle.

Yet at that very hour only a few miles away, the Royal army, perfect in equipment and the practice of arms, led by Sir Henry Monckton, was making camp at Monmouth Court-House and American soldiers under General Anthony Wayne were not far distant.

But Mrs. Marsh did not speak of battles and dangers near at hand to Bee and the happy little Quakers:

"Don't stay too long here; there's to be cold

custard for dinner!" she reminded them as she started up the lane toward the house.

"And what else?" called Bee, taking the wintergreen-flavored "gooseberry" carefully from her mouth.

"Chicken salad, my dears!" Mrs. Marsh called back: "Nothing hot to-day, only cold things. Sugar cookies, maybe!" and Bee smiled as she repeated "Sugar cookies!" and Sara and Susanna were as well pleased as Bee herself at so appetizing a prospect.

"Would you not like a little yellow house, Susanna?" asked Bee, as the hard candy balls sufficiently disappeared so that it was once more possible to talk, and Sara had mounted Dart. "A little yellow house with a yellow kitchen and a round yellow table and little yellow chairs!" Bee continued eagerly as she and Susanna followed the pony up the lane.

"I would well like such a house," Susanna soberly replied. "Dost thou mean for a playhouse, Melissa?"

"Yes; a doll's house. Well, Susanna, I'm going to make one for you. You and Sara can help and maybe we can finish it this very afternoon!"

Susanna stopped short and gazed at Bee in amazement.

"But how can thee make a house and tables and chairs, Melissa?" she asked.

Bee laughed gleefully.

"I'll show you after dinner!" she promised, clasping Susanna by the hand and hurrying her on up the lane, so that when Dart stopped at the stable door Bee and Susanna were close behind him.

CHAPTER XVIII

BEE DISCOVERS THE ENEMY

Dot and Spot kept close at Bee's heels as she led the way to her cool little chamber over the front door where the girls bathed their flushed faces and made ready for dinner that Dilly announced was ready and waiting.

In response to the eager questions of Sara and Susanna regarding a yellow playhouse Bee would only shake her head and bid them wait until dinner was over; with the result that none of the little party gathered about the round table seemed to have much appetite for the excellent salad or the frothy custard and sugar cookies. The girls were all on the alert to be off to the shed, while Mrs. Marsh's thoughts were with her soldier husband and the possibilities of a battle near at hand. For the past weeks she, as well as many other New Jersey women, had been preparing lint from old linen, making rolls of soft bandages and doing up bundles of clothing to send to the American troops who were suffering for supplies of all kinds. Now, as Bee and her

friends ran out through the garden, where tall blue larkspur, foxgloxes and big crimson peonies were in full bloom, toward the shed where Ring kept a store of paints, tools and piles of empty boxes, Mrs. Marsh returned to the big upper chamber where she worked steadily through the hours of the sultry summer day.

The bucket of yellow paint stood just inside the shed doorway.

"There's the paint!" said Bee. "And"—pointing to a large wooden box—"there's the house. But we'll make the table and chairs first," she added. "I watched my father make those little chairs and I know just how."

"Does yo', Missy! Wal, dat am fine. But yo' jes' let ole Ring he'p yo' a bit," suggested the old colored man, who appeared from behind the wooden boxes.

"We're going to make a playhouse and paint it yellow. And all the furniture is to be yellow!" Bee explained and Ring nodded as if he quite understood that a playhouse and its furniture would naturally be painted yellow.

"Yo' all better sit down on dis bench nigh de do'r," he said, drawing a low wooden bench to the open doorway and here the little girls seated

themselves while Ring dragged forward a clean wooden box just about high enough for Capella and Alcyone to stand upright in.

"How'll dat do?" he questioned, and Bee and Sara both declared it would make a fine playhouse.

"Den we'll begin de furnichoor," said Ring. "Yo' jes' mark out de size ob de table top, Missy Bee!"

And Bee left the low seat to stand in front of Ring's work-bench where he had placed a smooth square of white wood. In the center of this square Ring lightly drove a tack and to this tied a bit of string, and when Bee had decided on the right size for the top of the table, Ring fastened the string to a bit of red chalk, drew it taut and then ran the red chalk around the board making a perfect circle at which all the girls, for Sara and Susanna had followed Bee to the work-bench, exclaimed in admiration.

Ring then showed them how to cut the wood away and leave the tiny round top for the table, and Sara asked to do this while Bee and Susanna shaped the four legs, and Ring soon started off about his own chores.

Bee again described Miss Vinal's yellow

kitchen and promised her companions that the playhouse should be exactly like it.

" Maybe we can begin to paint it this afternoon," she said hopefully.

" Are we to have it to take home? " asked Susanna.

" Yes, indeed. I'll get Ring to carry it over just as soon as it is finished," said Bee.

" How hot it is," Sara said, brushing back her yellow curls and looking toward the garden where white butterflies danced over the tall larkspurs. " I'd like to go up in the loft and swing."

Bee looked at her in amazement. " And not finish your playhouse? " she asked.

Sara nodded. " I'd rather swing than whittle," she replied, " and 'twill take days and days to make all the things thee tells of."

" And Mother said we were to make an early start for home," said Susanna.

So Bee, a little reluctantly, gave up her plan to make them a yellow playhouse—at least she gave it up for the present but she resolved, as she followed Sara toward the barn loft, that she would make all the furniture herself and paint it: " I'll cut two little windows in the side of the box and make white curtains and I'll make

two rag dolls. Then when it is all finished I'll carry it to their house for a surprise present," thought Bee. Later on, in the cool autumn days with the help of Nancy, Bee carried out this plan and the yellow playhouse became the treasured possession of the two little Quakeresses.

But even Bee owned that the loft, with its wide open doors, was a much cooler place than the shed, and the swing was as much fun as Sara had expected it to be. Susanna declared the loft was the best playhouse possible.

The afternoon hours sped quickly, and when Sara said they must start for home Bee instantly offered to go part of the way with them.

"We'll bring Dart, and take turns riding," she said. So Sara and Susanna ran to the house to put on their sunbonnets, and bid Mrs. Marsh good-bye, while Bee again bridled and saddled the willing pony and the three girls started happily down the lane with Susanna riding Dart.

"I'll go to the turn of the road," said Bee, "and as I'll ride all the way home I won't ride going."

The turn of the road was the very place where, a month earlier, Sara and Bee had concealed themselves behind underbrush when the young

English soldier's horse had dashed by and where he had crawled to hide. Here Sara dismounted and Bee bade the two little girls good-bye.

She watched the white-clad figures in the close white bonnets disappear down the dusty highway, mounted Dart and had turned him toward home when the distant sound of a bugle call made her quickly draw rein and wait hoping to hear it again. In a few moments the musical notes were repeated.

"Whatever can it be?" she wondered. "It may be the American soldiers. Peter Vinal said they were on the march. Oh, I wish I was at Monmouth Village. It might be that General Washington is close at hand."

But to ride on and pass Sara and Susanna would not do. Then Bee remembered that Lieutenant Compton had left the highway and rode across fields and pastureland and without another thought Bee turned the pony, urged him to push through an opening in the underbrush and on over the meadow that stretched off toward the village.

It was not long before Bee heard other sounds than that of the bugle. As she reached a thick growth of forest that bordered the road leading

to Middletown, she halted the pony, slid from his back and fastening his bridle-rein to a near-by sapling, crept forward. The neighing of many horses picketed along the road, the rattle of baggage-wagons, the hum of voices, the many noises of soldiers making camp, could be clearly heard and Bee, sure that in another moment she would see American troops, possibly General Aaron Burr, young Hamilton or Lafayette, even Washington himself, reached an opening where the camp lay stretched out before her.

"It's the English army!" she whispered, holding her breath in fear as she looked at numbers of scarlet-coated soldiers moving about and realized that, within a stone's throw of Monmouth Court-House, lay the well-trained troops of Sir Henry Clinton.

And now Bee's only thought was to reach home as soon as possible. To the frightened girl it seemed sure that they would discover and take her prisoner and she ran back through the woods, mounted Dart and urged him into a more rapid pace than the pony had ever before attempted.

Across the fields into the highway raced Dart, and even after reaching the lane Bee did not permit his pace to slacken.

From the kitchen doorway Dilly and Ring gazed in amazement as Dart and Bee came dashing into the yard. But Bee did not stop to explain as she ran through the kitchen calling: "Mother! Mother!"

"Whatever is the matter, Bee?" and Mrs. Marsh's startled glance rested on the child's flushed cheeks and frightened eyes as she fled into the upper chamber where her mother was still at work.

"The English army, Mother! At Monmouth! I saw them," exclaimed Bee and in response to her mother's anxious questions she told of the bugle-call.

"I thought it might be Father's army and I rode across the fields and to the woods, and oh, Mother! There's thousands of English soldiers," she said breathlessly.

"'Tis what Peter Vinal bade us expect," Mrs. Marsh said. "But be not so frightened, dear child. General Washington knows where they are. Have you so soon forgotten the Hessian's letter?"

Mrs. Marsh soon quieted Bee's fears, telling her that their own home was too far from Monmouth to be in danger. "Remember, Bee, that

but for Sara's Quaker bonnet you might not have done a real service to the American cause."

And hearing this Bee's face brightened; she was no longer afraid. Her mother was sure the American army was not many miles distant and was confident that General Washington would not permit the enemy to march across New Jersey in triumph.

By twilight Bee was rested after her mad scamper along the road, and she went to the stable to make sure that Dart was none the worse for his hard ride. But Ring shook his head disapprovingly as Bee met him near the stable door. "Dat ain' no way to treat a pony," he said, "'tain' no way right, Missy Bee."

But Bee did not tell him why she had ridden Dart at such a pace. Mrs. Marsh had thought it best not to let Dilly or Ring know that English troops were so near. "They will hear it soon enough, and perhaps by that time Washington will also be close by and then Dilly and Ring will feel themselves safe," Mrs. Marsh had said.

There was no disturbing sound near the quiet house that night, and Bee was fast asleep at an early hour. But Mrs. Marsh realized that along

the highways that intersected at Monmouth Court-House American troops were moving steadily on to encounter the enemy. She knew a great battle must be close at hand.

CHAPTER XIX

JUNE 28TH, 1778

THE Marsh farm was three miles or more distant from Monmouth Court-House; and the long lane leading to the house from the main road was lined with thickly growing trees that nearly hid all the farm buildings, so that strangers traveling the highway might easily have passed the entrance to the lane without noticing any house near at hand.

Mrs. Marsh felt this to be a great protection. She was confident that unless American troops at once attacked the enemy that the English troops would move on toward Middletown and that an encounter would be postponed.

The morning after Bee's discovery of the English camp was clear and pleasant, but the brazen sky and heavy air indicated another day of extreme heat. Mrs. Marsh and Bee were both up at sunrise and as they ate their simple breakfast Bee again described the glittering uniforms of the English soldiers, the many horses,

the long line of baggage-wagons that she had seen on the previous day.

"Do you think Washington will dare attack so great an army?" asked Bee, and her mother's look of astonishment and instant reply:

"'Dare?' General Washington knows not fear. 'Tis the English who will run, not the Americans!" made Bee smile happily. Before that day ended the little girl was to know that her mother's words were true.

Before they finished breakfast Dilly with terror in her voice appeared at the door saying:

"Mistress Marsh! Dey's cum! De English! Yas'm! Dar's gwine ter be a war right side de Court-House! Yas'm! Dar's a man fum Monmouth jes' stop'd in our yard an' he says dar's t'ousan's ob English dar!"

"Where is the man?" replied Mrs. Marsh, but Dilly shook her head hopelessly. "He put right off, Mistress. His hoss was all of a lather. I reckon he was a-runnin' ter safety."

Mrs. Marsh shook her head. "Safety isn't found that way, Dilly," she said, and added, "We need not have any fear, Dilly. Only bid Ring to see that the cows are kept in the barns until all these armies have vanished."

But Dilly was not so easily assured.

" Anyways I'se gwine ter keep clus ter Missy M'lissa!" she declared. " She kind of vanishes off dese times, an' 'tain' safe." She shook her head so solemnly that Bee's sober face brightened and she exclaimed:

" Whatever do you think could happen to me, Dilly?"

" Yo' might jes' vanish agin, Miss M'lissa. An' if dar's gwine ter be a war I'se gwine ter keep an eye on yo', I sure is!" The solemn tone made Bee laugh aloud as she slipped her hand into Dilly's.

" Why, Dilly! You know there's been a war going on ever since I was a little girl. You mean a battle. And perhaps a battle that will end the war."

Dilly only shook her head at this and made no reply. The faithful servant wished that Lieutenant Compton and Prince were once more in the chamber off the Marsh parlor. But she said nothing of this as she went back to her work, and Bee followed her mother to the upper chamber where rolls of bandages, packages of lint and bundles of clothing for needy American soldiers were piled on bed and chairs.

" It is too warm, Bee, for you to stay up here," Mrs. Marsh said, " and you had best keep in the shade out-of-doors."

" Mother! Do you suppose Father will come to-day? " Bee asked, as she stood by the open window that looked toward a slope covered with tall pines.

" It may well be that he will not be far away," said Mrs. Marsh. Bee was quick to notice that her mother's face wore an anxious look, and the little girl went quietly out and down the stairs. The front door stood wide open and although it was but an hour after sunrise the air was close and sultry and Bee decided to go up the slope where the shade would be pleasant. Crossing the garden and the head of the lane she was soon in the shade of the forest trees and she wandered on, climbing steadily toward the top of the ridge.

There was one tall pine here that rose above the others. Bee had often climbed this tree, and she remembered that from its upper branches she had looked down on the few clustering houses of Monmouth Village. Instantly she resolved to climb the tree.

" Perhaps I'll see American soldiers coming," she thought as she grasped one of the lower limbs

of the tall pine and pulled herself up. It was an easy matter to climb from branch to branch until, securely perched near the top, her arm clasping the stout trunk, she could look over the forest trees and across the pastureland toward the little Jersey village that from that very day, June 28th, 1778, was to stand forth forever in the history of American valor.

Bee knew just where to look for the enemy's camp and she could see that the wagons were moving off toward Middletown, that different regiments were forming in line, long columns of scarlet-coated soldiers moved along the road.

"Where are the Americans?" wondered Bee; she could not know that all the past night Dickinson's militia in the woods not far away had been alertly on the watch, and that General Lee was now moving toward the enemy.

"If I was on the top of Briar Hill I could see further," thought Bee; and as she came carefully down from limb to limb and stood safely on the carpet of pine-spills, Bee decided to go on to the top of the next ridge and following an opening in the forest she went on toward the further slope.

There was a pleasant coolness in the deep

wood, and had it not been for Bee's anxious fears she would like to have lingered in the shade but her thoughts now centered on Monmouth.

" Perhaps the Americans won't stop the English army at all," she thought as she hurried on and at that moment the long roll of artillery, the thunder of guns reëchoed through the quiet countryside. The Battle of Monmouth had begun.

For a moment Bee stood silent and listening. The reports seemed to shake the very ground on which she stood. A little further on lay the summit of the ridge from where Bee knew she could see to where the three roads of Monmouth met at the old Court-House, and she hurried forward.

Peering out from the shelter of a sturdy oak Bee looked down the slope of the ravine. In the distance she saw lines of men in linen shirts and homespun trousers, American soldiers; and she knew these soldiers were not advancing; they were evidently retreating before the sweeping columns of the British.

To Bee this seemed the most terrible of misfortunes. She clung to the tree wondering if her father could be among those fleeing soldiers, and

then she saw the Americans halt, face about as if suddenly inspired with new courage and Bee herself relinquished her clasp on the friendly tree with a little exultant cry. She saw a mounted figure dash up the slope and through the lines, checking the retreat of the recreant Lee and changing defeat to victory.

"It is General Washington," Bee exclaimed and gave a sudden cry of surprise when close beside her a familiar voice exclaimed:

"It is indeed! But what do you here, little maid?" and she looked up to find Peter Vinal beside her. Before she could speak he had swung her about and given her a little push down the path toward home.

"Be off with you, child. Hurry home! General Wayne is coming up yonder ridge with Lieutenant-Colonel Aaron Burr, ready to face the English, who are close behind. Run for your life."

And Bee ran, pushing through underbrush and ferns, hearing volleying guns echo across familiar fields and knowing that at Monmouth Court-House a great battle had begun. A battle where Americans faced the proudest army in the world and won.

Bee was at home before her absence had been noted; warm and tired from her hurried rush along the wood path she climbed up to the barn chamber, bidding Ring tell her mother where she was, and glad to rest on the hay-filled cushions.

The heat of the day steadily increased, and in the midst of the conflict that raged about the old parsonage in Monmouth a young woman, the wife of an American gunner, Molly Pitcher, carried water from a wayside spring to the men. Back and forth she went, always in danger, but putting others' needs before her own safety. And when her husband fell beside his gun she sprang forward and took his place, and through that hot and terrible day until American victory was assured she served as a cannoneer. After the battle she was commended and praised by General Washington. The Battle of Monmouth and the name of Molly Pitcher, whose real name was Mary Ludwig Hays, live together in history.

Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Monckton, who commanded the English troops, had fallen on the field of battle and as the long summer day came to an end the American victory was as-

sured. There was nothing for the King's troops to do but retreat, and as the darkness fell the Royal army stole away.

It was early the following morning when a little party of horsemen rode up the lane to the Marsh farm and Dilly's delighted cry: "H'ar be Massa Marsh!" brought Mrs. Marsh flying to the yard hardly believing such good news could be true, but overjoyed to welcome him. Chubby trotted off to his stable unnoticed as Captain Marsh introduced his companions, the young Lieutenant-Colonel Alexander Hamilton and Peter Vinal.

Dilly hurried off to prepare food, and the tired soldiers were glad enough for a few hours' rest in the quiet house.

Peter Vinal had told Bee's father the story of his first encounter with Bee in the coach, and of the English soldier whose effort to escape had made him a prisoner in Washington's camp.

"And so this is the little maid who started to bring the Hessian's note to headquarters!" said the handsome young Hamilton whose bravery had that day won him Washington's admiring approval. "'Twas well it reached us when it did," he added; and Bee told him the story of

Sara's Quaker sunbonnet and the part it had played in the affair.

She heard her father say that it was probable General Washington and a division of his troops would be passing the Marsh farm in a few hours and she exclaimed:

"Oh! I would well like to see him, perhaps to hear him speak!" and Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton promptly declared that would be possible.

"I shall join him near this point," he said. "We are to move on to Brunswick and White Plains, and I'll venture to say he will be well pleased to greet so loyal a maid."

It was quickly decided that the Marsh household should all be at the foot of the lane to greet the triumphant troops as they rode past, and Ring and Dilly carried down buckets and pitchers filled with raspberry-shrub that the soldiers might have a cool drink.

"Put on your white muslin, Bee, and the silk stockings that Aunt Amy sent you," whispered her mother, and the little girl ran to her room thinking this was the most wonderful day of her life; for was not her soldier father at home safe and well and before the day ended was she not to see the great Washington! perhaps even touch

his hand and hear his voice! And as Bee slipped the flounced muslin over her head she said aloud:

"I do wish Nancy was at home to-day, so we could see him together."

CHAPTER XX

"MELISSA"

As soon as Bee was dressed she followed the others down the lane. Captain Marsh and his wife, Colonel Hamilton and Peter Vinal stood near the road while Dilly was close at hand with pitchers of cool drink. Ring had been promptly sent off with a wagon-load of bedding, clothing, food, bandages and lint for the wounded men at Monmouth. The American army had suffered severe losses in officers and men and Monmouth Court-House was filled with the wounded.

Bee climbed to her favorite seat on the wall, the place where she had so often sat waiting for the sound of Chubby's feet bringing her mother home from Monmouth Village. She stood looking down the highway that led to Monmouth. It was not long before she saw a little cloud of dust in the distance and then a party of horsemen appeared.

"They're coming, Father! They're coming!" she called eagerly, jumping to the ground and running toward her father and mother. Peter

Vinal and Colonel Hamilton were close at hand and at Bee's words Hamilton swung himself into his saddle and was off down the road to meet his commanding officer.

Bee could see Colonel Hamilton turn and swing into place beside the horseman who rode at the head of the party, and the little girl was quick to recognize in this tall commanding figure the same soldier whom she had seen on the previous day as he dashed over the crest of the hill to turn defeat to victory.

"It's General Washington," she said, to the amazement of her father and mother, "I know it is because I saw him yesterday; did I not, Mr. Vinal!"

"You did, indeed, little maid," responded Peter and turning to Captain and Mrs. Marsh he told of his surprise when, on scout duty about the enemy's camp, he had discovered Bee on the crest of Briar Hill looking down the ravine where the traitorous Lee had given orders for the Americans to fall back.

"'Twas surely a great sight for the little maid," declared Peter. "The British were coming on through the open field in perfect order, marching in two columns, their artillery and

horse between them, and before them the Americans, faint with hunger and heat, moved back because General Charles Lee commanded it. Then, at the very moment when the little maid peered out from behind the oak, the Americans suddenly halted and the columns of soldiers faced about! Washington came riding like the wind, and saved the day. You'll not forget that moment, I warrant, little maid!" Peter concluded soberly.

"'Tis a wonder Bee was not in the midst of the battle," said Captain Marsh, his hand resting on her shoulder as if to make sure that she was really safely beside him. "She seems to have started as a messenger with news of the movements of the English army, to have served as a guard to an English prisoner and to have beheld General Washington at one of the greatest moments of his career. She will indeed remember it."

"I might have helped Molly Pitcher carry water to the soldiers if Mr. Vinal had not sent me home," said Bee regretfully.

But now the little group grew silent, for the great general with young Hamilton at his side was near at hand, and Bee's eager glance fixed it-

self upon the noble face of the great soldier and statesman who won the liberties of a struggling nation.

There was a little smile on Washington's grave face as his glance rested on the small white-clad figure who stood by the roadside, and who now curtseyed low as he drew near and brought his horse to a standstill.

It was Captain Marsh who led the little girl to the mounted general saying: " This is my youngest daughter, Melissa, sir."

An ungloved hand touched Bee's brown hair and a kindly voice spoke her name.

" Melissa, a loyal little maid of Monmouth," he said. " Colonel Hamilton tells me you brought a prisoner to camp and that 'twas you who gave Vinal the Hessian's note."

Bee curtseyed again. " If you please, sir, we wish no harm to Lieutenant Compton," she said.

" Nor shall harm befall him at our hands," declared Washington, " and he shall know who has befriended him."

As Washington spoke with Bee, officers and soldiers refreshed themselves with the cool drinks that Dilly and Ring had prepared, and then with a parting salutation to Captain and Mrs. Marsh,

General Washington again smiled down at the little maid who stood gazing up at him. Over and over to herself she was repeating her own name: "Melissa!" "Melissa,"—and at that moment she resolved that henceforth she would always be called by the name the great Washington would remember her by.

Colonel Hamilton and Peter Vinal said their good-byes and joined their tired comrades and with a wave of his hand to the little group by the roadside General Washington resumed his march. Trenton and Princeton had turned the tide of war; the evacuation of Philadelphia and now the victory at Monmouth assured the Americans that very soon they could hope to be a free nation. The battle of the previous day, June 28th, 1778, was to be remembered for several important facts: It was at Monmouth that the last great battle of the American Revolution was fought, as from this to Yorktown the conflicts were on a smaller scale. It was at Monmouth that soldiers from all the thirteen colonies took part and here Charles Lee, the traitorous officer of American troops, ended his career as a soldier. At Monmouth the soldierly qualities of Washington impressed the entire world. His

presence stopped the retreat, his courage inspired the soldiers to victory, and on the battle-field of Monmouth Molly Pitcher had won an undying remembrance.

It was of these things that Bee's father and mother spoke that summer evening as, with Bee's hand clasped in her father's, they all sauntered up the shady lane to the quiet house and Bee listened eagerly.

As they walked past the tall larkspur and the drooping peonies Bee said:

"General Washington spoke my real name, Melissa, and now I want to be called Melissa. Nancy said when I grew up everyone would call me that."

"And are you beginning to grow up, dear child?" said her father, smiling down at his small daughter.

Bee nodded soberly. "I feel grown up now," she declared. "Bee is a good baby name but I like Melissa better."

"Don't you know, dear, why we have called you 'Bee'?" asked Mrs. Marsh, as they all seated themselves on the steps of the porch. Bee shook her head and looked questioningly toward her mother, who said:

"Why, Melissa means Honeybee. And that explains your baby name."

"Oh, Mother! Isn't that splendid!" exclaimed the little girl. "I shall like Melissa now better than ever."

Nevertheless, from then on Bee insisted on being called Melissa, and was always ready to explain that "Bee" and "Melissa" had the same meaning.

On Ring's return from Monmouth Court-House he brought Sara and Susanna Gray with him. Sara explained that her mother had gone to Monmouth to help care for the wounded soldiers and, if they would not be a trouble to Mrs. Marsh, they were to stay that night with Bee.

They were warmly welcomed, and Bee at once led them off to the barn loft where she could tell them of the wonderful fact that she had seen General Washington on the field of battle; and that, not an hour before, she had looked into his kindly face and heard him speak her name.

"And now," Bee concluded, "I want always to be called Melissa!"

Sara and Susanna listened approvingly and did not fail to remind Bee that they had always called her by her "proper" name.

"And didst thee know, Melissa, that a woman fought at Monmouth? That she fired a cannon, reloaded it and fired it again and again? She was at our house last night," Sara calmly announced.

"Molly Pitcher! At your house? And did you speak with her? Oh, Sara! What is she like?" questioned Bee for, next to the glorious fact of seeing General Washington, Bee was sure that a sight of the heroine of the battle-field of Monmouth would be something never to be forgotten and she wondered how Sara could speak of it so calmly.

"She is a young woman; my mother says she is not over twenty-four, and her eyes are blue. She stayed with us an hour or more and my mother went back to Monmouth with her," Sara calmly explained as she continued to swing slowly, and then added, "But her name is not what thou sayest, Melissa. It is Mistress Mary Ludwig Hays and her husband's name was John. I heard her tell my mother so. And my mother says hers was the most noble deed of Monmouth's battle-field, since Mistress Hays could not bear to see the poor soldiers in the heat and dust suffer from thirst without carrying them

cool water from the spring and, in danger as she was of being shot, 'twas great courage!"

Bee made no answer. To herself she was picturing a blue-eyed, sturdy young woman venturing her life to give help to the suffering, and then standing by her husband's gun throughout that hot and terrible day and Bee realized then that Molly Pitcher was indeed a real heroine.

"I wish I might have seen her," she said thoughtfully.

"Miss M'lissa-a-a, Miss M'liss-a-a!" called Dilly, and a little smile came over Bee's face as she promptly responded, "Coming, Dilly," and the three little girls went down the steep ladder and across the yard to the peaceful house. Never again would Bee frown at the sound of her name.

The victory at Monmouth was the beginning of a brighter era for the American forces. It was celebrated with great rejoicings throughout the thirteen colonies and Congress tendered Washington and his army a vote of thanks for "exceeding valor."

It was months later before any news regarding Lieutenant Compton came to the farm where he had been cared for after his unlucky accident

the previous May. Nancy had returned home and she and Bee were happily at work on the yellow playhouse when, one morning in early September, Ring brought home a package from Monmouth addressed to "Miss Melissa Marsh."

"Whatever can it be?" said the little girl, "and 'tis from New York! Look, Nancy! Whoever is there in New York to send me a gift?"

"Open it and find out," laughed Nancy, and Bee carefully untied strings, broke the seals and from its many wrappings drew out a small square picture in a carved frame.

"'Tis of Prince!" she exclaimed delightedly, holding up the water-color sketch of the brave little dog whose story she had told her sister. The picture showed Prince, his clever head turned a bit to one side as if listening and Bee declared it looked exactly like him.

"But what a queer frame," Nancy said. "'Tis of little bees," and the two sisters now looked admiringly at the carved frame that enclosed Prince's picture. It was evidently the work of the young English soldier who Bee had insisted was her prisoner. It was a skillful bit of carving; the bees, lightly gilded, stood forth from the

background of the deep brown of the wood, " as if they were flying around the picture," Bee declared.

There was no written word with this gift and it was some time later that Peter Vinal brought the news that Lieutenant Compton had been exchanged for a young American soldier held a prisoner by the British, and that he had sailed for England.

As the days passed and the great struggle between England and America came to an end, Bee no longer thought of the young lieutenant as an enemy. She treasured the beautiful little picture of the faithful dog, and one day confided to Nancy that it was to Prince and Lieutenant Compton that she owed the wonderful fact of having seen and spoken to the great General Washington. And, when Nancy had listened to Bee's story of the lieutenant's capture and the events that followed, she agreed that her little sister might well think so.

" What was that verse he taught you, Melissa? " she asked, for now all the family were careful to call the little girl by her " grown-up " name, and Bee, after a moment's thought, said:

" This was the last verse:

"'Upon St. Crispin's day
Fought was this noble fray,
Which fame did not delay
To England to carry.
Oh, when shall Englishmen
With such acts fill a pen,
Or England breed again
Such a King Harry!'

"I guess there'll be poems written about Monmouth," said Bee, "and about Molly Pitcher."

"I shouldn't wonder," agreed Nancy.

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